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October 23, 1998

COMMONWEAL

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THE PLAY & THE CONTROVERSY

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DAVID TOOLAN on Anthony de Mello

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To the Editors

Helpful history

I am no great fan of Andrew Greeley, but I believe his article on the revolutionary character of Vatican II ["The Revolutionary Event of Vatican II," September 11] served an extremely useful purpose. It jogged our memories of history, and that is something we Catholics need.

In conversations with fellow Catholics, both liberal and conservative, about the path the church is taking, I am struck by how often ideology trumps history, and how often the ideology is thin stuff, a blend of time-bound religious perceptions and the chatter you hear on television.

We need more sense of history so that we will be less superficial. We need to know that the church is not doomed always to follow the apparent direction of the moment.

The Dominican Simon Tugwell has written: "The church has known many different moods in the course of her history. Sometimes she appears to be very confident of herself and of the value of her message, sometimes she seems rather to be a bit confused and unsure of herself; sometimes she boldly tells everyone exactly what they ought to be doing, sometimes she gives the impression of groping in the darkness. And it is not necessarily in her 'best' moments, when she is most confident and clear, that she is most true to herself."

WILLIAM F. BELL
Lenox, Mass.

Pulpit failures

I must sadly agree with Father Greeley's article that church documents of the past half-century, especially *Humanae vitae*, in combination with misunderstanding of the primacy of conscience, have shattered the church's authority structure. Of the documents cited by your author, I will comment on those dealing with birth control.

Once it was taught that all forms of family planning were sinful; couples were to accept children lovingly from God. When Pius XI modified this teaching by permitting the use of natural family planning, I can remember hearing a father of thirteen say: "Why didn't they tell me this twenty years ago?" That protest has devolved into the attitude expressed by those who say, "Those Vatican celibates should stay out of our bedrooms!" The great majority of married Catholics use artificial means of birth control; of these, many justify their conduct by simply denying that the church has any authority whatever over matters sexual.

I differ with Father Greeley when he writes that the church documents *themselves* "contributed substantially to the weakening" of church authority. I believe the blame belongs more properly to the clergy. Every Sunday priests have fifteen minutes to tell the faithful not only that the church's authority rests on Christ's command: "Go and teach all nations...whoever hears you hears me," but also that where noninfallible teaching is concerned, they must prayerfully and responsibly educate their own consciences and consider their own circumstances.

Those who follow this path may well be doing the right thing for the right reasons. For decades, the theological reasoning behind that stance has been available to the clergy from authoritative sources—for example, in the responses to *Humanae vitae* by the hierarchies of France and other nations.

If I may believe the media, the average Sunday homily is now better prepared than was the case thirty years ago, but too often it is still theologically superficial. Priests should have helped maintain respect for the magisterium by preaching clearly and frequently on the interplay between church authority and the role of conscience—and can still do so today. "A drop makes a hole in the rock by falling on it not forcefully but often" (Ovid).

JOHN C. KERSTEN, S.V.D.
Bay Saint Louis, Miss.

The writer is the author of Bible Catechism *(Catholic Book Publishing Corporation, Totawa, N.J.).*

Guilty of what?

May I quibble with one sentence in your September 11 editorial ["The President"]? "Except in the further reaches of libertarian advocacy," you say, "there is a consensus about the president's sexual misdeeds."

A consensus of disapproval, yes, but no consensus on the grounds for disapproval. Moral traditionalists (old-fashioned Christians and others of that ilk) condemn his conduct as "sinful" or " immoral." Moral liberals (the kind of people who like to talk in terms of "social constructions") condemn it as "improper" or "inappropriate."

This difference in judgmental adjectives reflects a serious difference in moral theory. Traditionalists think in terms of a breach of an unwritten law—a law perhaps made by God, but at all events not made by human beings. Moral liberals, having scant sympathy with such metaphysical notions, think in terms of a breach of social conventions. For them, adulterous sex with an intern at the White House belongs in the same moral genus with bad table manners.

President Clinton himself—in keeping with his goal of being all things to all men—condemns his conduct as sinful on some days and inappropriate on others. It all depends which audience he has in mind.

DAVID R. CARLIN
Newport, R.I.

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COMMONWEAL

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(Continued from page 2)

Death of a pastor

One of the donors listed in your "Next Generation" ad in the issue of September 11—identified there as "Rev. William Davidson, MI"—passed away on Friday, October 2. Father Davidson is the reason I have been a *Commonweal* subscriber. One parishioner said to me yesterday, "Mary, he raised our kids." I replied, "He raised me." If not for Father Davidson, I would still be a Catholic child. I think that today I am a Catholic adult.

He was the founding pastor of Saint Anastasia Church in Troy, Michigan, created by the late Cardinal John Dearden as an experimental parish. Father Davidson experimented. I think we were the first to have women Eucharistic ministers, the first to have communal penance services. All along we have had female "Father's Helpers" on the altar during Mass. He insisted that parents were the educators of their children, and his religious education classes were for parents to teach their children. We finally instituted formal classes for children but the parents are highly involved in preparing their children for the sacraments.

He died on the golf course—the tenth green—right where he would have wished (he loved golf). Please pray for our parish.

MARY HALPIN
Rochester Hills, Mich.

Healing tears

The article by Donald Moore, "With Tears that Heal" [September 11], had special meaning for me, as the wife of the terminally ill patient for whom Mass was offered in our home. I knew and in a way shared the suffering my husband had to undergo, but it was truly a Mass of healing for us as well as for Joe. He felt our love and experienced great relief, knowing that now he and all of us could face the burden of his coming death. It was shortly after this that Joe said to me, "I think I'm ready to die." My hope is that the publication of the article will be of help to others trying to help a loved one prepare for that final journey.

MARTINA PARANDA
Edison, N.J.

Why do I love thee?

When asked why I subscribe to *Commonweal*, I don't have to count the ways. I need only point to such succulence as this line from James Duffy in his September 11 review of *Will This Do?*, the Auberon Waugh autobiography: "His American publisher will not make profits comparable to those rolling in for the McBlarney Brothers' reminiscences...."

EDWARD F. HAYES
Orlando, Fla.

Owning one's parish

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry when I read Father Kevin Codd's description of a typical American parish undergoing an influx of immigrants ["Bring Back the Ethnic Parish," September 11]. For many years I had thought that my parish was unique, that our experience would provide enough grist for several doctoral theses in sociology. It seems that we are only one of many.

My wife and I were trained as cross-cultural missionaries, speak Spanish, spent several years in South America in the mid-'60s, and hoped to apply all this in our own land. It was not to be. We were unable to provide a bridge. In the late '60s I actively participated in the organization of the parish council. I promoted the idea of having representatives of our then smaller Latino community take part, which they did with enthusiasm—so much so that the council became bilingual.

In the ensuing years our Latino brethren have taken ownership of the parish and it is flourishing. The only hold the original community has is the school and the CCD, both of which are taught in English but serve a majority of the Latino pupils; their parents seem to prefer that their children become integrated.

It would seem that the situation is the reverse of what it was thirty years ago. It is not. In those years the Latino minority was growing; now, the Anglo minority is shrinking. We find ourselves on the fringe of a vibrant parish community: ready, willing, and able, but uninvited to the banquet. But if, by some stroke of the archbishop's pen, an Anglo parish were created, I wouldn't change. I truly enjoy the liturgies (the chaos of Palm Sunday, the somberness of Good Friday, and the exuberance of Easter); most of them are in Spanish and overflowing. But it's still my parish.

JAMES T. DETTE
Weehawken, N.J.

No argument

In her column for the issue of September 25, Sidney Callahan confronts the warrior generals and writes: "All right, I understand the arguments of my fellow Christians who defend *just wars*. But in the end, none of these arguments convinces me." (Italics added.)

Am I odd? It seems to me that in any debate that I have with any person of good will concerning any moral issue, I could substitute almost any word or words for those above in italics. Instead of "just wars," for example, substitute "pacifism," or "abortion," or "women's right to ordination," or "homosexual love," or "impeaching the president."

I find this disconcerting. After we each present our side, we seem only to agree to disagree. I hear in the Gospels the invitation to change our minds, but in so many areas that seems to be only a remote possibility at best. Each of us appears to be so completely certain of our own position. We say we understand the other's position, but do we ever change our minds?

ANDREW GALLIGAN
Tracy, Calif.

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License to kill

We must all die. But prosperity, good food, and medical advances allow that day, at least in most advanced industrial countries, to be postponed far beyond any time dreamed of by our ancestors. The biblical golden age of threescore and ten has become commonplace. And where advanced old age is not reached, still many older people manage to live with ills that rapidly ended the lives of their parents or grandparents.

Because death has been staved off for so long for so many, achieving the end of life in a "good" death has actually become more ambiguous and more problematic. People linger in states of physical pain and spiritual or psychological suffering, sometimes attached to tubes and monitors, or sometimes abandoned in nursing homes, half-comatose and badly cared for. There is surely something paradoxical in living a life where death comes to seem a far preferable alternative, but which, nonetheless, stands just beyond the grasp of the suffering and dying.

Such are the scenarios that drive the movement for physician-assisted suicide. People who have watched parents, spouses, friends, even children dying so painfully, or who fear such an end for themselves, may become ready supporters of proposals that would allow physicians to legally prescribe lethal doses of drugs with which dying persons might kill themselves. It seems simple enough to execute. Furthermore, it plays into a well-honed American instinct—to be able to choose for oneself. Couching the proposed law within apparently strict limits, by restricting the practice to the competent and the conscious, allows voters to say to themselves, "I would never choose this myself, but who am I to keep others from choosing it?"

Something like this argument must be running through the minds of many Michigan voters, who will face "Proposition B" favoring physician-assisted suicide on the November 3 ballot. It is far from clear how the vote will turn out; those favoring Proposition B hold a slight lead in the polls.

Certainly the citizens of Michigan have had a long time to consider the matter. The state is the home of Dr. Jack Kevorkian, who has "suicided" 120 people since 1990. Strenuous efforts by state prosecutors to rein him in have been rejected by four juries who seem to have focused on the suffering of the victims rather than the guilt of their killer. At least some of those supporting Proposition B say they do so in the hope that it will put an end to Kevorkian's free-lance efforts; indeed, a good number of his victims would not qualify under Proposition B's provisions. But neither is it likely that Kevorkian would abide by those provisions should the referendum pass and become law.

The case against physician-assisted suicide, which is essentially a moral case (thou shalt not kill; thou shall not help others to kill themselves), is straightforward and clear. For centuries, it has been enshrined in medical ethics, the common law, and statutory law. But the effect of watching, or hearing about, needless pain and suffering at the end of life clearly has a powerful appeal to jurors, and voters. And for many the core belief that life is a gift of God has been replaced by the notion that life is an accident of nature.

As opponents to physician-assisted suicide discovered in their unsuccessful ef-

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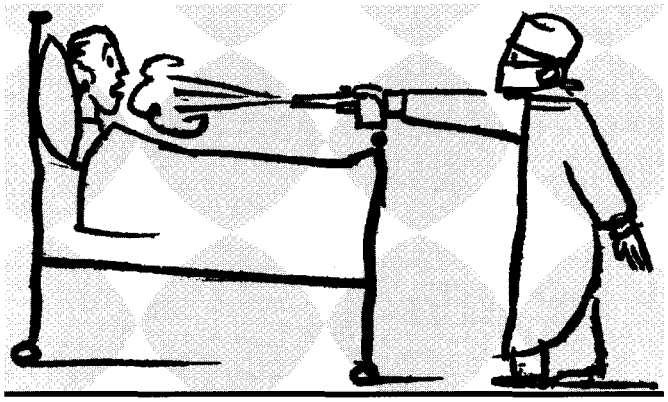

forts to prevent a similar measure from becoming law in Oregon, mounting a convincing case is not easy, or necessarily straightforward. The moral case, particularly if it is advanced by religious groups, especially the Catholic church, can bring forth charges of violating the separation of church and state, and can unleash ugly anti-Catholic prejudices. In fact, some analysts believe the Oregon vote for physician-assisted suicide may have been tipped in its favor simply because of Catholic opposition to it.

But there are realistic, pragmatic, practical arguments that can help to unmask the notion that each of us is and ought to be the ultimate master or mistress of his or her own fate—and the parallel idea that legalizing assisted suicide is a way of expressing our mastery at end time. What might be termed a nation-sized pilot project conducted in Holland demonstrates that when physician-assisted suicide is permitted and becomes the social custom of the land, it will be gradually extended to persons who are not terminally ill, who are not competent, or who are not even conscious. When the arguments favoring assisted suicide are pursued to their logical conclusion, they lead inexorably to expansion of the categories of people who will be allowed to take their own lives or have their lives taken from them—quite possibly with the encouragement of others whose interests may be in conflict with the dying person's.

However pragmatic such arguments may be, they have substance. Opponents of referenda such as Michigan's Proposition B need to organize coalitions with sufficient resources to educate the public, and they need to offer political arguments in keeping with their own moral position. In Michigan, the coalition, "Citizens for Compassionate Care," has focused on such arguments and drawn attention to problematic aspects of the proposed law. The Michigan Catholic Conference is part of the coalition. At the same time, Michigan's Catholic bishops have developed their own parish-based program to remind Catholics of the basic theological and moral reasons for rejecting physician-assisted suicide.

This two-pronged strategy is important because in the first instance it may help defeat a bad law that would have the most serious consequences for individuals, families, and doctors. In the second instance it may help make people more astute and thoughtful about death and dying, about what kind of "choice" the voters of Michigan will be making.

A MORAL SENTIMENT

If Allen Greenspan, Robert Rubin, and their esteemed international colleagues can't agree on remedies for the global economic crisis, can the editors of a magazine with an annual deficit (which, though well below Japan's, is nonetheless worrisome) possibly come up with any?

Well, no. And fortunately no one has asked us.

But if the "technical" answers to the "contagion" now threatening the "globalized" economy are not obvious or ready-to-hand among those who trade in such goods, perhaps a turn to the moral dimension would help. After all, Adam Smith, the man who wrote *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), first made his reputation with *A Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759)—and they were not mere "sentiments."

Amazingly such a sentiment has been expressed by Mr. James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank. At the gathering of world economic leaders in Washington on October 6, Mr. Wolfensohn argued that the approach of institutions like the International Monetary Fund must be adjusted so that "mathematics will not dominate humanity."

After reviewing a year of global upheavals, Mr. Wolfensohn summed up (*New York Times*, October 7):

"We must address the issues of long-term equitable growth on which prosperity and human progress depend.

"We must focus on the institutional and structural changes needed for recovery and sustainable development. We must focus on the social issues.

"We must do all this. Because if we do not have the capacity to deal with social emergencies, if we do not have longer-term plans for solid institutions, if we do not have greater equity and social justice, there will be no political stability, and without political stability no amount of money put together in financial packages will give us financial stability."

His argument is perhaps a trifle utilitarian, but to us his advice sounds almost as good as an encyclical.

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JOHN GARVEY

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

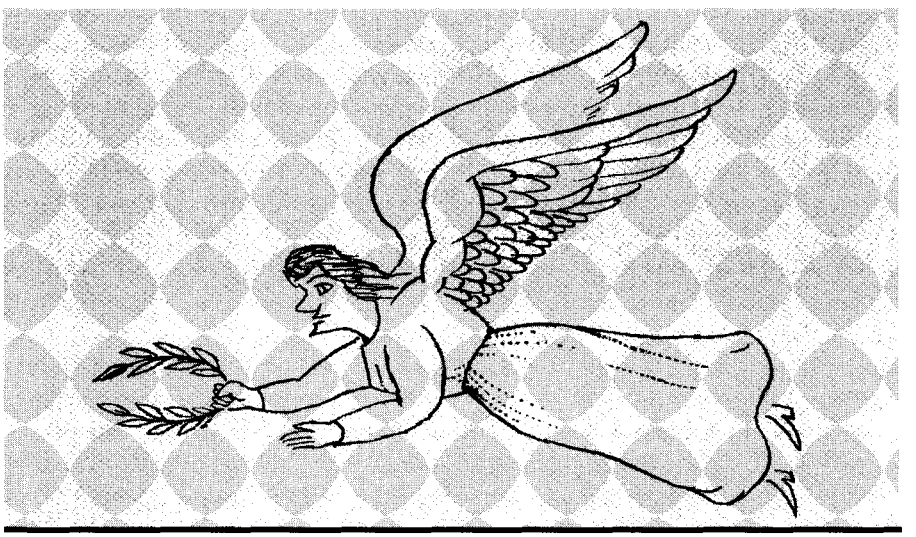
The church is not the kingdom

For years, people who are involved in churches and synagogues have been told by people who are not, "I'm not involved in any institutional religion." There is a more recent addition to this, a harvest from self-help and twelve-step programs, plus popular angel lore and dumbed-down Buddhist literature: "But I am very spiritual." There has been an arch and unhelpful response to this from people who are involved in churches: "Would you rather be involved in a disorganized religion?" This is unfair, because all of our churches have a lot to answer for. Looking at us Christians from the outside, it is hard to see what would draw people to do what Jesus invited his first followers to do: Come and see.

What they are likely to see in too many cases is bishops fighting with other bishops or with clergy and laypeople. While the people who say "I am a spiritual person" or "I believe in spirituality" are headed in a terminally cloudy, feelings-led direction, the sad example of the churches makes it clear why they head that way. The idea of spirituality itself is a problem: It gets mixed up with all the stuff that makes you feel good about yourself, with therapy, with a sense of things having changed in your life because of something wise you decided to do. (I plead guilty to having edited a book called *Modern Spirituality: An Anthology*.) It can seem part of a self-help program in a time when helping yourself is all-important.

We can argue that this is an individualistic, potentially self-deluding direction, and we might well be right. But let me suggest that the church has its own problem here, and it doesn't have to do with the failure of all those barbarians or insensitive, post-Enlightenment, individualistic folks to appreciate a more communal sense of the Christian community. It has to do with the fact that we have come to see the church as something that exists *in addition* to what has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ. And this really is the devil's work.

Paul's letters to the Corinthians and the Galatians make it quite clear that the church has always had a problem, but Paul's emphasis—everywhere—is that for the Christian "to live is Christ," that we are baptized into Christ, that the extent to which we can call God our Father is because of Christ, and that anything that distracts us from this relationship is deluding. His letters make clear a wrong direction that happened before Constantine but probably got even worse afterwards, and that is the thought of the church as an institution that involves Christ, somehow includes Christ—among other things. The church made its peace with power, and to some extent that was inevitable. Paul makes room for this peace, but it is, or should be, provisional. Where corruption really sets in is where the church, fearing for its position, is uncritical of power, or wealth, or (perhaps even more corrupting, because it is so much more subtle) when it fears loss of the good opinion of others, for seeming to be foolish. The church goes drastically wrong when it sees itself as an institution, one of many needed for a civil society.



The concern for power and position applies across the board: The liberal and the conservative have their own versions. It is easier for some liberal Christians to criticize Pat Robertson than to criticize the editorial board of the *New York Times*, despite the moral and spiritual bankruptcy in both places. The right, for its part, is too eager to get Caesar on its side.

Church politics resembles academic politics in its dishonesty. I have worked around real politics, and it is more or less clear (at least among its participants, when journalists aren't around) about the fact that what it really cares about is power and money and how they are spread around. It isn't pretty, and it certainly isn't good, but it is more honest and refreshing than a form of politics which pretends to be about God's work, or academic freedom, and is still really about money and power.

But it isn't only money, power, or prestige. I heard once about an old monk who said that what he would miss most, when he died and went to heaven, was the Mass. There is a profound cluelessness there. The most subtle temptation for church-prone people, really a dangerous one, is to love the church in an esthetic way—to be in love with ritual

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itself, to delight in the feelings we now have about being part of the church, to belong too easily—dangerous, because it lulls us into forgetting that during the liturgy we are taking the bread of the kingdom that is still to come.

When the church forgets that its only reality is the Lord whose return we await, when it loses this eschatological sense of itself, it loses its truest vocation. Our work is to realize that "here we have no lasting city." We are to live (as the letter to Diognetus put it) as if we are at home in any place, and aliens everywhere. We are not, above all, to make the church a part of our lives. Our life in the church is either seriously an effort to realize what Paul meant when he said "to live is Christ," a life that looks forward to his coming, or it is nothing. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

E.J. DIONNE, Jr.

NERO REDIVIVUS

Congress should stop fiddling around

As the House droned on to its inevitable conclusion on October 8 on the impeachment inquiry for President Bill Clinton, the little box at the bottom corner of the television screen kept reporting the bad news. The Dow Jones was down more than two hundred points when I was watching. The market later recovered, but I couldn't help ruminating on the cliché: To compare this to fiddling while Rome burns may be unfair to the Romans.

What will the historians make of us? At one end of town, the folks at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were trying to find ways to avoid a global economic catastrophe. At the other, the congressional majority couldn't even agree to set time limits on the Clinton inquiry and restrict the investigation to the matters Ken Starr put on the table—even though it is Starr's referral that launched the inquiry.

Does anyone believe that the gravest threat to our republic is the possibility that we'll settle the Clinton matter too quickly? We've only been at this, in one way or another, for more than four years.

To paraphrase the good Admiral James Stockdale: Who are we, and why are we here? To take the second question first: We're here because the president had an astonishingly irresponsible sexual relationship that, according to Monica Lewinsky's testimony, he knew could get him into trouble. Then he lied about it for seven months. He jeopardized himself, his supporters, and, most importantly, whatever hopes he had of making enduring changes in American political life.

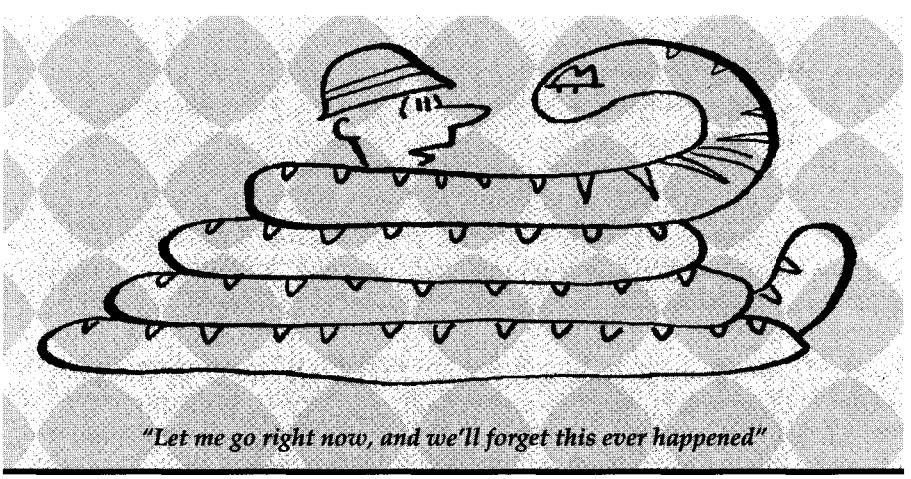
We're also here because the independent counsel decided to veer off his inquiry into Whitewater, Travelgate, and Filegate and cross his investigation with the Paula Jones lawsuit. According to a recent *New York Times* report, his office was tipped off in advance about Linda Tripp's allegations, which raises many questions about how the two cases got intertwined.

And we're here because the Supreme Court, in its wisdom, decided that a civil lawsuit that could lead to questions about the president's sex life couldn't possibly disrupt the president's work.

But what do we do now? The inquiry approved by the House is open-ended. There's no time limit. Anything that comes across the transom can be added to the committee's investigation. As Congressman Barney Frank (D-Mass.) argued, with a debt to Jesse Jackson, Republicans "keep hope alive" that new charges will turn up to make impeachment easy.

If the Republicans had been smart, they would have agreed to Democratic proposals to limit the inquiry. One Republican who believes this is William Kristol, the editor and Republican adviser who wants Clinton thrown out of office. "There's a chunk of Republican opinion that doesn't want to give up the hope of new scandals and new smoking guns," Kristol said in an interview. "I'm happy to confine it to the scope of the Starr referral. It's ludicrous to think Starr will come up with something on Filegate" or the other matters in question, Kristol said.

The notion that elaborate hearings will turn up new evidence is also suspect. "There are no evidentiary issues here," Kristol said. The danger to Republicans is that "the strongest argument with the middle of the body politic" appeals to "the desire to get it over with." It's important, he said, "that Republicans not be the party of dragging it out." But that's exactly the course they've chosen. As Congresswoman Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) noted, they voted "to put our country in suspended animation for months and months." The result was a highly partisan divi-



"Let me go right now, and we'll forget this ever happened"

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sion on a matter that cried out for bipartisanship.

It's possible, of course, that Republicans will view this differently after the election. The voters who want this to end could choose to send them a message. And moderate Republicans may suggest that Clinton be rebuked but allowed to govern.

But to return to Admiral Stockdale's question: Who are we? Will our grandchildren look back on us and say we were the generation so obsessed with the Clinton scandal that we couldn't pull ourselves together to prevent the human costs of a worldwide economic downturn? Herbert Hoover may look like a hero compared with us.

Kristol thinks Clinton should be tossed from office. I think he should be censured and allowed to serve out his term. Most Americans and—despite many pious statements to the contrary—most members of Congress also know where they stand. The public's sentiment on this issue is exactly right: Let's decide and get back to business while there is still business to get back to. □

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David Toolan

DR. SEUSS CONDEMNED

Grinches go after de Mello

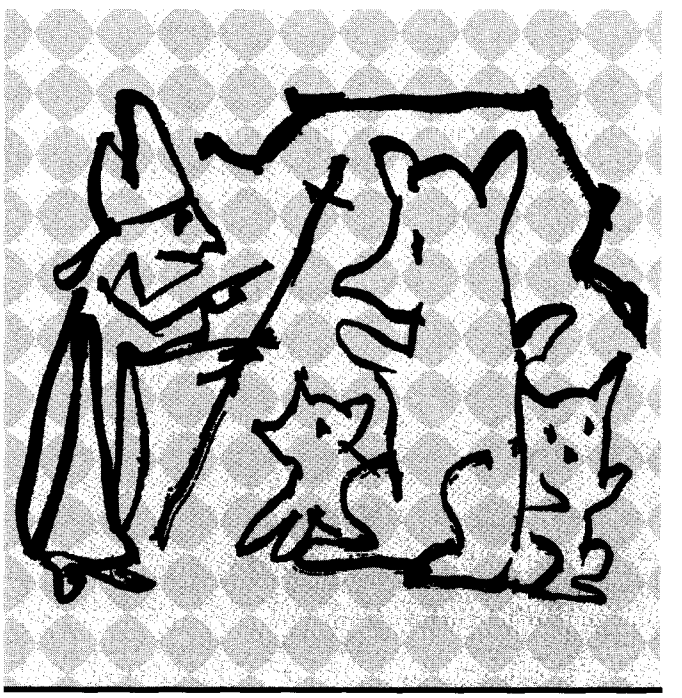
This past summer was one of the more depressing I can remember, and it had nothing to do with El Niño. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) was busy tightening up and closing down. First came the extension of "almost-infallible" to disputed questions like women's ordination and Anglican orders. Then, by means of a procedural ruling, came the effective nullification of the teaching power of regional and national bishops' conferences—and more depressing still, the acquiescence of the bishops in the status of office boy. After a brief run, it seems that episcopal collegiality has now been relegated to the department of obsolescent terms in the holy Roman church.

The final blow came on August 23 with a CDF "notification" that the writings of Father Anthony de Mello have been examined and in part found wanting—"incompatible with the Catholic faith" and a cause of "grave harm." As one Jesuit wag put it, going after de Mello, the very popular Indian Jesuit retreat master who died suddenly of a heart attack at age fifty-six in 1987, is a little like condemning Dr. Seuss!

In my judgment, Father de Mello's *Sadhana: A Way to God* (Doubleday) remains the best Catholic "how to" book for someone looking for instruction in methods of prayer. Some of de Mello's early texts, the CDF acknowledges, "can be helpful in achieving self-mastery, in breaking the bonds and feelings that keep us from being free, and in approaching with serenity the various vicissitudes of life." But overall de Mello's writings are said to exhibit a "progressive distancing from the essential contents of the Christian faith." Particularly objectionable, it is alleged, are his concept of the unknowability and cosmic impersonality of God, his sense of Jesus "as a master alongside others," a preference for "enlightenment," criticism of the church, and an excessive focus on this life rather than life after death. Bishops were ordered to ensure that the offending texts are withdrawn from sale and not reprinted.

The Vatican is bewildered by de Mello's emphasis on "awareness" and "interior enlightenment" over against Scripture, doctrine, and belief—and puts the worst possible construction on de Mello's awkward formulations. His stress on awareness, I would say, tries to get at the difference between theory and experience, external conformity and interiorized faith, or the letter of the law versus the spirit.

De Mello's insight into the liberating effects of awareness derives from his training in Buddhist *vipissana* ("insight") meditation. When I was in Bombay in the summer of 1975, I made an appointment with a Mr. Guenka, who was de Mello's insight meditation teacher, to see if I could arrange a retreat with him. No luck; our schedules did not allow it. (Guenka was a successful entrepreneur, of crockery and dairy products, who gave insight retreats on the side; he was, I felt, the only interesting and believable guru I met on my six-week tour of India.) It would be another decade before I was able to make a ten-day Buddhist insight retreat (in Barre, Massachusetts), which consisted of eight hours of silent meditation a day. It was one of the most enriching experiences I have ever had—it cleared the mental and emo-



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tional passages, opened up the whole psychophysical system. I came away with a deepened recognition of how, in G.M. Hopkins's words, the Holy Spirit "over the bent world broods."

The key to understanding de Mello's writings (largely story collections) is to have made one of his retreats. Otherwise, since he borrowed freely from other religious traditions, especially the Sufi tales of Idries Shah, he will be misconstrued. The Vatican complains of "ambiguity" and "perplexity" in interpretation. But of course. De Mello was not writing theology; he was a collector of parables, and loved to shake people up, get them thinking or reimagining. Above all, he was an artist in helping people to reimagine God—as much greater and more giving than they had dreamed. For years I resisted attending one of his retreats—because in adapting to American culture I thought he talked too much! And in that period of my life I wanted a silent retreat.

But in the early 1980s I finally gave in. And what did I find? The man was a mesmerizing storyteller, of course, and could have made it as a standup comic in the Catskills. (He also should have been sued for violating copyright laws, for the stories he "borrowed," without credit, from others.) But what I most remember is his image of God—beyond words yes, but boundless in generosity, love, and forgiveness. What I found, in other words, was the gospel, and the very orthodox spirituality of the fourteenth-century classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing*—a God who is incomprehensible to intellect but knowable to love and to love alone. De Mello used an odd principle to get at the unfathomable goodness of God—the idea that God couldn't be worse than you and I, but had to be at least as good as we are at our best. What came out of that pedestrian principle was a radical doctrine of divine abundance and grace.

"At various points in his books," says the CDF's explanatory note, "institutions of the church are criticized indiscriminately." A story from de Mello's *The Prayer of the Frog* (Gujarat Sahitya Prakash) is cited as evidence: "A public sinner was excommunicated and forbidden entry to the church. He took his woes to God: 'They won't let me in, Lord, because I am a sinner.' 'What are you complaining about?' said God. 'They won't let me in either!'" Has Rome lost its sense of humor? What would the Vatican have done, do you suppose, if it had had to deal with that Galilean upstart who went about calling the religious authorities of his time "whitened sepulchers" and "hypocrites"? De Mello lets the church off easy in comparison. Rome sometimes gives the impression it has forgotten that our roots lie in the Hebrew prophets, the force of whose criticism is directed against the home team.

"Every good Christian," says the preface to Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, "ought to be more ready to give a good sense to the doubtful proposition of another than to condemn it." Would that this text were inscribed over the door of Cardinal Ratzinger's office. □

David Toolan, S.J., *is an associate editor of* America *magazine.*

John Horgan

CALL ME 'MOTHER'

Ordained to be renegades

The campaign for the ordination of women in the Catholic church took a dramatic turn on September 14—but whether it moved forward, backward, or sideways is difficult to determine—with a ceremony at a small church north of Dublin in which a sixty-seven-year-old female hermit went through a ceremony of ordination presided over by a dissident priest who had himself undergone a rite of episcopal "consecration" five months earlier.

The ceremony, which was attended by about 150 people, represents the conjunction of a series of unlikely occurrences and extraordinary people. The ordinand is Sister (or Mother, as she now wishes to be called) Frances Meigh, who was born an Anglican, converted to Catholicism at the age of twenty-one, married and had three children, had her marriage annulled, and was consecrated as a hermit under canon law 603 in 1994 by Bishop John Crowley of Middlesborough, in the North of England. Bishop Crowley is a former private secretary to Cardinal Basil Hume of Westminster, and reputedly destined for further promotion in the hierarchy: the embarrassment potential of the event is therefore significant.

The cleric, Father (or "bishop," as he now describes himself) Pat Buckley, is a validly ordained Roman Catholic priest who worked for some years in the ordinary parochial ministry before falling out with his bishop. Since then, he has operated on a free-lance basis, but has not hesitated to take initiatives—such as officiating at wedding ceremonies for Catholics who have undergone civil divorce proceedings—not calculated to endear him to his former episcopal superiors. In May of this year, he was ordained as a bishop by the equally dissident Bishop Michael Cox,

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who traces his line of succession through a Bishop Kieran Broadberry, who was episcopally ordained at the age of seventeen by Bishop Clemente Gomez, who now describes himself as Pope Gregory XVII, and who was ordained some years ago by a formerly orthodox but subsequently dissident Vietnamese bishop.

Ordinand and cleric alike believe that the ceremony, though unlawful, was valid. Church sources maintain both that the episcopal line which has emerged in Father Buckley is theologically tainted, and that in any case, as Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger have insisted, the church has no power to ordain women, even if it wanted to do so.

There is no doubt that Frances Meigh's ordination has attracted an extraordinary amount of publicity—she told the London *Guardian* with "childlike glee" that she had given more than sixty media interviews, and has a list of well-wishers that includes such unlikely bedfellows as Chief Buthelezi of South Africa and Tony Benn, the former British Labor Cabinet minister. Nor is she without support in Ireland, where traditionally there are wellsprings of sympathy for people who challenge established authority in the pursuit of apparently hopeless causes. For his part, Pat Buckley has said that he will ordain a further four priests—all men—for his newly formed Society of Saint Andrew.

There are, nonetheless, aspects of what has happened which should at least give pause to proponents of the ordination of women. The line of episcopal ordination from Vietnam to Dublin is certainly questionable, insofar as it relies for its justification primarily on the contention that an exercise of sacramental authority may be valid even if unlawful. That provision was originally devised as a protection for lay people, rather than as a way in which clergy could take power to themselves without the need for accountability. And while it is true that normal Catholic episcopal ordinations tend to muffle, at the very least, the New Testament concept of the "election" of bishops, the ceremony at which Pat Buckley was consecrated, and the ordination of Frances Meigh at which he subsequently presided, were redolent of a type of essentialist 1950s theology in which power and ceremony provided the *leitmotif*.

For the time being, therefore, it is likely that the battle will continue to be fought more on the question of chromosomes than on the aspects of canon law involved in Frances Meigh's ordination. At best, she is an unlikely successor to Mary Magdalene, described in medieval homilies as "the apostle of the apostles"; at worst, her well-meaning actions may further reinforce Vatican attempts to tie the hands of future popes on this most controversial of issues. □

John Horgan *teaches journalism at the Dublin City University. His most recent report in* Commonweal *was "No Melting Pot" (September 25).*

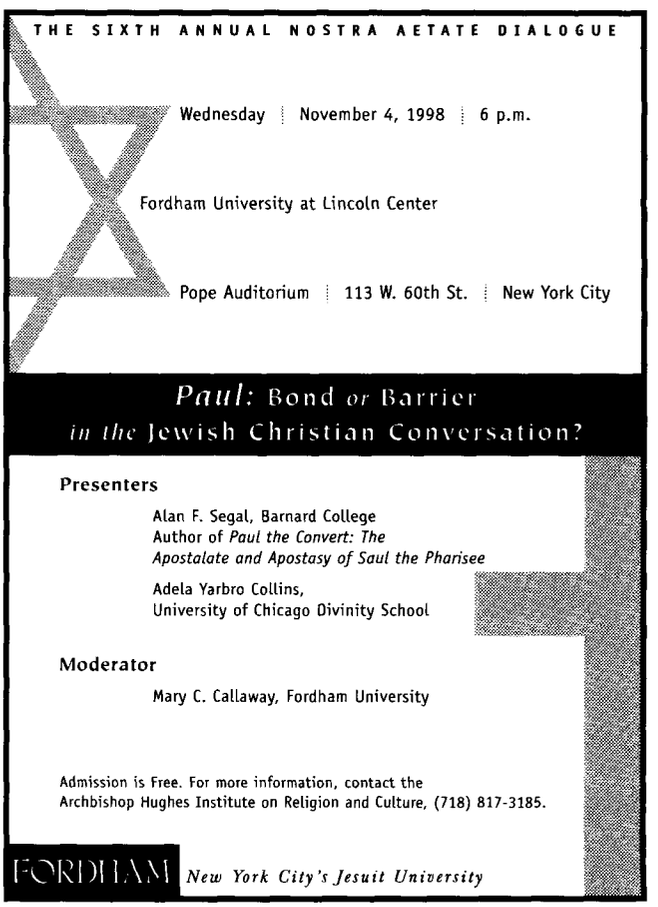
Steve Ellner

REPORT FROM VENEZUELA

Beating back neoliberalism

It is possible that when Madeleine Albright and other State Department officials first spoke harshly of Venezuelan presidential candidate "Commander" Hugo Chávez last spring, they had no idea he would become the nation's front-runner in this December's elections. In April, the State Department turned down Chávez's request to visit the United States to meet with multinational representatives. A U.S. spokesman stated that Chávez's coup attempt six years earlier against the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez had "dishonored" the Venezuelan armed forces, although the spokesman failed to explain why countless other military coup leaders have merited more cordial treatment. Chávez laughed off the visa denial and said that he would apply for a MasterCard instead.

Chávez's short political career has been marked by bold initiatives. The abortive coup he staged on February 4, 1992 against President Pérez pitted middle-level officers like himself against the military establishment. The coup was immediately denounced by parties across the political spectrum,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but it set in motion street protests that culminated in Pérez's removal from office the following year.

Sometime between late 1997, when he took in 5 percent at the polls, and his present ranking which has edged toward 50 percent, Chávez surpassed the front-runner, ex-Miss Universe Irene Sáez. Chávez, Sáez, and the two other candidates now with the most popular support began their presidential bids virtually without party backing, a telling comment on the bankruptcy of Venezuela's political parties. For years, political parties here, greased by Venezuela's oil-derived revenue, have dominated the political scene, performing favors for their members but not taking into account the nation's collective interests.

The United States has good reason to be uneasy about Chávez. By declaring "I consider myself a humanist, and a humanist has to be anti-neoliberal," Chávez has challenged a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy. Neoliberalism means government withdrawal from the economy, leaving the nation's economic fate to the private sector. The neoliberal approach in Latin America has translated into polarization between the rich and the poor, and the absence of a strong state apparatus to cushion the impact of globalism (NAFTA-type arrangements which inundate the nation with foreign merchandise). The activist state envisioned by Chávez is a response to nearly two decades of economic instability and crisis in Venezuela, much as the New Deal was a response to the Great Depression. Such policies are a far cry from the despotic plots which Chávez's adversaries accuse him of devising.

The groundswell in favor of Chávez puts the lie to neoliberalism's favorite postulate about the "end of history." According to that notion, there are no genuine alternatives to liberal democracy coupled with a laissez-faire economy. But Chávez's candidacy demonstrates that a neoliberal consensus has not emerged in Venezuela. Furthermore, his success has originated not from intellectuals, political parties, or the mass media, but from ordinary Venezuelans.

Chávez's rise is also significant for what it says about economic and political conditions in Latin America. Anti-neoliberals like Chávez have offered foreign capital guarantees, while eschewing intransigent positions. He pledges not to revoke the recent contract privatizing steel in Venezuela, even though he opposed relinquishing state control of this "strategic" sector of the economy.

Chávez's personal style has served to calm some fears regarding his alleged despotic intentions. It is true that Venezuela's minuscule Communist party endorses Chávez and that his two top campaign advisors are leftists. But sympathetic Congressman Carlos Melo told me "Chávez comes off as anything but an overbearing leftist or authoritarian military officer." He added that Chávez quotes Pope John Paul II, the Bible, and various outstanding nineteenth-century Venezuelans. Chávez advocates convoking a constituent assembly in which the organizations of civil society (such as neighborhood and professional associations) would play a major role in drafting a new constitution. This proposal points in the direction of an innovative model in which the masses are better represented in government. Regardless of whether the United States likes such proposals, it should recognize that, following nearly two decades of poor economic performance, they have struck a responsive chord in Venezuela.

Political commentator Andrés Galdo, who hardly sympathizes with Chávez, has warned that the "Stop-Chávez Campaign"—in which Chávez's rivals are uniting and aggressively concentrating their fire against him—could create an atmosphere conducive to electoral fraud, assassination, or a coup. And recent advice from J.P. Morgan and Moody—that investors think twice before purchasing Venezuelan government bonds—has added fuel to the fire. Chávez's adversaries attribute the freeze of foreign investment and capital flight to the "Chávez effect."

In private, however, influential business and diplomatic circles in the United States (such as former ambassador Ambler Moss, now at the University of Miami), are fearful that Washington will be left in the cold should Chávez become president. They argue that a U.S. declaration pledging active support for whoever wins the December election would send a clear message, particularly important given Venezuela's forty years of relatively stable, competitive democracy—a South American record. □

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BLASPHEMY ON STAGE?

'Corpus Christi': The play & the controversy

Paul Baumann

Last May, William Donohue, the ever-vigilant president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, raised quite a ruckus about the fact that *Corpus Christi*, Terrence McNally's play-in-progress, featured a gay, Christ-like protagonist who has sex, off-stage, with his male disciples. Donohue, who has a gift for strained analogies that rivals McNally's own, has called the play "hate speech," "bigotry," and of course "blasphemy." He has argued that a similar depiction of a black or Jewish religious figure would be roundly condemned. Only Catholics and their beliefs, Donohue insists, are held up to such ridicule. (I would refer Donohue to a Jerry Seinfeld turn as Elijah on "Saturday Night Live" as evidence that the Department of Ridicule is an equal-opportunity employer. But that's another argument.)

Following that controversy and in response to anonymous threats of violence, New York's Manhattan Theater Club (MTC) decided to withdraw the play from its fall season. That decision outraged the theater and civil-liberties communities, and the MTC immediately reversed itself. The play, or the scandal, or both, must go on!

So it was with some apprehension that I made my way up Seventh Avenue toward the MTC last month for the first preview performance of *Corpus Christi*. (The play officially opened, along with the renewal of Donohue's public campaign against it, October 13.) My anxiety was not lessened by the phalanx of blue-wimpled nuns who suddenly materialized on the sidewalk behind me. Sure enough, they followed me and joined other protesters in front of the theater. Access to the theater, however, was not obstructed. Once inside, I had to pass through an airport-like metal detection system, but the rest of the evening proceeded without any noticeable interruptions. The threat the play posed to my spiritual well-being remains to be determined.

Sitting through the two-hour preview performance, I was at times irritated, amused, and intrigued, but mostly nervous and finally bored. If the very notion of a sexually active Jesus is blasphemous, then *Corpus Christi* is certainly blasphemy. Like Martin Scorsese's film *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), McNally takes Jesus' sexuality as a potentially rich subject for imaginative exploration. The theological question is an old and abiding one: If Christ was "true man," how could he not have known sexual temptation? Theologians have various orthodox answers to this puzzle, all reminding us that Christ was "like us in all things but sin." In short, he didn't inhale. Though he assumed human nature, he was the "perfect man," not a representative or fallible man.

Scorsese, whose film was also the object of protest and boycott, took a shot at dramatizing this metaphysical conundrum by giving us a resolutely heterosexual Jesus who, however fleshly his fantasy life, still won the battle against sexual desire. Resisting sexual temptation is never a serious consideration for McNally's homosexual Jesus (Joshua is his name). "You can come only as close as my body. Everything else is hidden from you," Joshua tells his occasional lover, Judas. At the very least, McNally's tin—actually gnostic—ear for the centrality of sexual continence and renunciation to any authentic appropriation of Jesus' story makes Scorsese look like Saint Augustine.

Corpus Christi takes the gospel story and overlays and intertwines it with Joshua's prosaic American upbringing. The play is set in Corpus Christi, Texas, in what feels like the 1950s. The manger is a seedy motel room, Joseph a foul-mouthed lout, Mary a blousy, cigarette-smoking and uncomprehending bit of white trash, the disciples a boisterous—"Boy did we party!"—band of bar-hopping gay men. You get the picture. The satirical skits dramatizing Joshua's coming-of-age, with their stock impersonations of sadistic nuns and sexually conflicted priests, are trite and old hat. Joshua's carnal awakening takes place in the men's room on prom night at Pontius Pilate High. Ho, ho, ho. Indeed, our hero, an insecure and vulnerable gay teen-ager adrift in a violent, homophobic world, becomes the grateful partner of a sexually predatory Judas. He's quite a kisser, that Judas, McNally is forever winking. I could go on.

Anyone made uncomfortable by explicit talk about sex, especially gay sex, or by the irreverent treatment of religious figures or things Catholic, will certainly be offended by McNally's brazen marriage of gay self-realization and Christian redemption. "This is our way," says a disciple at the play's conclusion. "If we have offended, so be it."

Donohue has described the play pungently as "hate speech dressed up in artistic robes." In synopsis it can read that way. But the playwright makes a point of assuring the audience that "no malice" is intended. Hate speech doesn't ordinarily disavow its motives. Jesus, *Corpus Christi* tells us by way

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of warrant, "belongs to us, too," or words to that effect.

In truth, *Corpus Christi* is by turns cloying and crude, but not, I think, malicious. It's both spiritually ambitious and psychologically inert, as is any drama driven by political argument instead of character. McNally is not trying to expose the heretofore suppressed gay life of Jesus and his disciples. Indeed, it would take an exceptionally literal-minded theatergoer to mistake the Joshua of Corpus Christi, Texas, for the Jesus of Palestine—or for the Jesus of any realistic dramatic rendition of the Gospels. We are a long way from Pasolini's *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Instead, McNally is playing around with a number of Christian tropes and themes in an attempt to appropriate the moral prestige of the gospel to vindicate the dignity of homosexual love. Thus Judas's kiss of Jesus in the garden at Gethsemane—certainly the most notorious same-sex kiss in Western culture—is thoroughly eroticized. *Corpus Christi* also draws our attention, again and again, to Jesus' divine (in both senses of the word!) sonship and to the significance of his embodiment as a male. Indeed, in *Corpus Christi*, which features an all-male cast, women are utterly superfluous. Perhaps most suggestive of all for McNally's subversive purposes is the mystery and power of the idea that Jesus offers us his body—*Corpus Christi*—as the means of salvation. Christian symbolism is steeped in sexual imagery, and McNally insists on reading every ambiguity literally. From the expletive "Jesus Christ" to the gospel's exhortations to brotherly love, every double *entendre* is both potential gag and a potential imprimatur of gay love.

In conceding McNally's sincerity—let's call it a pettish sincerity—I don't want to pretend to be more worldly wise than I am. Even after eight years in New York, the sight of two men kissing passionately still makes me exceedingly uncomfortable. As the philosophical expression goes, it looks like a category mistake to me. However, given the frank and unapologetic homosexual world in which the play is set, the fact that one of the men is a kind of Jesus figure did not add appreciably to my discomfort. Perhaps I would have been more offended if *Corpus Christi* were a better play—if it had given us a more credible Jesus. But McNally's sexual/political agenda doesn't leave much room for three-dimensional characters. Moral didacticism struts and preens upon the boards. The hateful heterosexual world that crucifies Joshua is present here as little more than a collection of caricatures mouthing idiotic prejudices. Joshua is mocked and killed by self-loathing heteros because he is "King of the Queers." His claims to our sympathy rest entirely on his status as a victim. Abuse meekly endured, love wanly extended to all, exhaust Joshua's spiritual vocabulary. Jesus' sharp-edged righteousness or humbling purity never darken the stage. Anson Mount plays Joshua as a little lost lamb, as helpless before his adolescent tormentors or in the beefy arms of Judas as he is before his executioners. His one moment of adult anger is directed at a "priest" who anachronistically objects to same-sex marriage. Really, wouldn't it have been more effective just to hand out a flier on equal rights?

Worse, the salvation Joshua offers is new-age fluff and tasteless therapeutic theologizing. "All men are divine—that's the secret," he instructs those with ears otherwise deadened by disco. "I'm just a guy like you. We're each special, we're each ordinary, we're each divine." Not even the Romans would crucify someone for taking this drivel seriously.

Christians, historians tell us, have a penchant for demanding a Christ who reflects their own culture and aspirations. Recently, liberation theologians have given us a revolutionary Jesus, neocons dress him like a corporate executive, and a good many feminists seem eager to turn him into a gelding. McNally wants a gay Christ and seems to think that homosexual suffering and homosexual love can reveal another facet of the Truth that is Jesus. There is certainly a measure of truth in the latter proposition, but it is not a truth that will be found in *Corpus Christi*. Joshua is an utterly banal and sentimental figure, without a hint of Jesus' fierce authority or enigmatic otherness. It's not enough to say that "he belongs to us, too." For starters, the pronouns must be reversed. The self-satisfaction Joshua and his disciples exhibit is as theatrically sterile as it is religiously fraudulent. Jesus is a compelling figure to the extent he is a discomforting figure. He is, at the very least, a relentlessly two-sided character. The minute you are comfortable with him, he demands something else, something more, something impossible. One instant you are relieved to be able to give Caesar what he demands; the next you are told to relinquish all worldly possessions. You are told to honor your mother and father, then to abandon them. Adultery is forgiven, but then lust in the heart punished. Sins are pardoned, yet judgment is everywhere and uncompromising. Go figure. It is this prickliness, this demanding, almost imperious solicitude that makes Jesus such an inexhaustible presence. McNally's Joshua is all used up in a mere matter of hours.

That said, I am not nearly as confident as Donohue and his allies that the tradition has always gotten sex right or that there will never be a way to reconcile the sense homosexuals have of their own identity and the demands of the church. McNally is no guide, but that hardly settles the question. Despite *Corpus Christi*'s trivialization of the gospel, I left the theater struck by how resilient the Incarnation story remains as drama. Even twisted almost beyond recognition, the uncanny nature of Jesus' actions speak to us in *Corpus Christi*. My ordinary work and churchgoing seem intent on rendering the gospel reasonable. But the idea of crucifixion—of bloody sacrificial atonement—is much more difficult to get your mind around when presented plausibly on stage. There is a physicality to the theater that ups the ante, and Joshua's crucifixion is one of the play's more affecting moments. *Corpus Christi*'s uncompromising focus on Jesus' maleness, the play's insistence on eroticizing Joshua/Jesus' body, somehow made the crucifixion and the suffering more real. So I came out of *Corpus Christi* thinking oddly orthodox thoughts, thanks to a patently blasphemous play. □

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BEGINNING DOCTORS

A word from the wise

Margaret C. Heagarty

I am greatly honored to be asked to say a few words on what, with time, you will discover is one of the more memorable occasions of your lives. But given the distance in our ages, I have wondered what I can say to you that would not sound like banal clichés, what you could possibly hear and use as you take this first, symbolic step toward your goals in medicine.

First, I realize that I am more than a trifle envious, for I know things you can only imagine. For example, I remember, with considerable clarity, an opening lecture by a dean more than forty years ago when I began medical school. I can still feel my anxiety, and—terror being the rule of the day then—this silly man actually said to us, "Look to the right of you, look to the left of you; one of the three of you will not complete the course." And he was quite correct; about 25 or 30 percent of us did not make it. Fortunately, those days are long over; medical education has advanced and, all things being equal, you can expect to receive your degree at the end of four years. I remember he also said, "Medicine is a stern mistress." And since I had just graduated from a Catholic women's college run by the nuns, I thought this was pretty risqué stuff. But he was right about that, for medicine is a stern mistress, requiring the best in us to meet the challenges of providing medical care.

But while medicine demands a great deal of us, I also know the joy of it: the joy of mastering the intellectual content of the field, the bonds with colleagues, fellow students, as we struggled together to get through anatomy or cellular biology or surgery. You will find that in these four years you will establish friendships for a lifetime. I know the laughter that comes with the absurd things that can happen during your classes, in clinics, with patients, with colleagues. I know how it feels to have a little old lady take my hand and say, "Oh doctor, I always feel better after I've seen you." Or the intellectual satisfaction of making the diagnosis of pyloric stenosis—an obstruction of the duodenum found in infants—that can be cured rather simply. Or my delight and pleasure with the first valentine I received from a little ten-year-old girl. But I also know the pain of having made an error in clinical judgment, either because I was too stupid or inexperienced or distracted or whatever. And with some difficulty, I have had to learn to live with those mistakes, learn to forgive myself my own human failings. For, with age, I have come to understand the necessity of the virtue of humility. I have come to understand that if I cannot accept and forgive my own humanity, I will never be able to forgive and accept the human frailty of my patients.

All of this you have yet to experience. But as it comes your way, you should savor it. For if the first time is not the best time, it is surely the best-remembered time.

My father was a physician, a country doctor who spent his life caring for the coal miners of West Virginia. When he graduated from the University of Georgia about 1928, he did not have vitamins, steroids, hormones, or antibiotics in his doctor's bag. He did have a doctor's bag and he did make house calls. At sixteen, I learned to drive on a World War II jeep, accompanying him around the hills and hollers of West Virginia as he made those calls.

When I graduated from medical school almost thirty-five years ago at the University of Pennsylvania, the science of immunology was in its infancy. I have just enough wisdom and resignation to come to accept the fact that many, if not most, of you right now know more about T cells and B cells and complement than I shall ever know. CAT scans, never mind MRIs, intensive care units, and mercifully the HIV virus, were not part of my beginning medical agenda. And, of course, neither Medicare nor Medicaid had been invented to pay for care of the elderly and the poor. And I cannot resist commenting upon another obvious difference. When I began at the University of Pennsylvania there were only about ten of us with two X chromosomes in a class of 150. And those ten of us girls were clearly one or two standard deviations off the then social norms for women.

To digress, I remember in the early seventies lecturing to first-year medical students at Cornell. When I finished a young woman came up to me and said, "Dr. Heagarty, I enjoyed your lecture, but I did notice that when you referred to a child or a pediatrician you used the pronoun 'he.' I want you to know that times are changing." I thanked her politely and thought, "Dearie, you have missed the whole symbol. If I weren't standing here lecturing to you, you wouldn't be

Margaret C. Heagarty, M.D., *director of pediatrics at Harlem Hospital Center in New York City, is professor of pediatrics at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University. This article is based on an address she gave at this year's White Coat Ceremony at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. The occasion marked the initiation of a new class of beginning medical students, their taking the Hippocratic Oath, and their investiture with the physician's traditional "white coat."*

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in that chair listening." So, a little respect for us old girls, if you please.

You begin medical studies at a time when the entire health-care system is in flux, when new challenges ranging from the aging of the nation's population to the HIV virus to managed care will bedevil you over the next thirty-five years. And as I have meditated upon you, me, and my father, I have wondered what, if anything, links us. In the more than seventy-five years since my father began his journey in the profession, has medicine so changed that we have little to share with one another?

But I believe that while the scientific knowledge base has broadened and changed, and the structure and the organization of the profession have surely changed—indeed dramatically in the past few years—the basic core of who we are and what we do has not changed and must not, ever.

And that fundamental core can be found in an old-fashioned word, "vocation." My basic message to you is that a vocation, by definition, is more, much more than simply an income-producing occupation. I believe you, as I and my father, have decided to become physicians out of some sort of idealistic need or calling to serve our fellow human beings. With this choice you, as I did, are about to embark upon a long and arduous novitiate during which you will not only be taught basic scientific knowledge and skills but also the social and ethical norms of the medical profession. Today you take your first vows as a member of this profession.

When I began at the University of Pennsylvania there were only about ten of us with two X chromosomes in a class of 150.

Notice that the metaphor of vocation is not completely poetic; there are considerable similarities between medicine and the other classic professions or vocations of religion, law, and education. For example, you will be bound by a "seal of the confessional"; the content of a physician's relationship with a patient is no more discoverable by law than a priest's knowledge of a penitent. You will be expected not to take advantage of those for whom you are responsible, and in some sense you will be expected to place your patients' welfare above your own self-interest. In return for these duties, the larger society will give you a license to do things, to perform acts that others may not. And notice that the licensure or permission comes now, before you take any examinations to practice medicine. It begins, in fact, the minute you enter the anatomy lab. Only your status as a medical student permits you to dissect a cadaver, otherwise you could be put in jail. By this societal permission or licensure, you are expected, indeed required, to adhere to the tenets of the ancient Hippocratic Oath, to remain true to your vocation.

In return for your performance of these duties and obligations, the larger society will also award you high social status, autonomy, and financial reward. While the incomes of physicians are likely to moderate in the future as compared to the immediate past, you will become, as I am, valued and comfortable members of the nation's upper or middle classes.

All of this may sound like obvious generalizations, but as I have thought about you, I suddenly realized that I have a personal and rather pragmatic stake in your future careers. For I am of the age when it is likely that very soon I will need to rely upon you or someone very like you for medical care. And I wondered what would I want from you, when I come to see you with my chest pain or my depression or my Parkinsonism.

Of course, I would assume that you are medically competent and have managed to keep up to date, more or less, with advances in science and therapeutics. But please note, I do not expect you to know it all, for that is impossible for any of us. More importantly, I do expect you to know what you don't know and to be wise enough to recognize your own limitations; to know when to ask for help or consultation from colleagues. This decision can be among the most difficult for any physician; there is a very delicate balance between asking for help as against rejecting a patient out of insecurity or an unwillingness to make a difficult clinical decision. Of all the attributes a physician must develop, an awareness of one's limitations and a recognition of one's responsibilities to each patient are preeminent. Notice that if you do decide to send me to someone for consultation, I will continue, if you are my primary-care physician, to expect you to retain control of my medical care, to coordinate what any number of specialists may recommend. I do not want my medical care to be provided by a committee. I want someone who takes the ultimate responsibility and makes the ultimate decisions about what I may or may not need.

But I would want much more. I would want to know that you have stayed true to your vocation. I would want you to *listen* to me, to hear my concerns—real or imagined—and to acknowledge and understand them. I would want you to understand that as a patient, I am, by definition, at the minimum anxious, if not scared to death. I would expect you to have learned how to comfort me, to relieve my terror.

For the next year or so, the mysteries of anatomy, physiology, and the like will seem formidable to you. But the task of learning how to relate to your patients, how to develop caring for your patients—both those you enjoy and those you don't much like—will be an equally if not more difficult task to master. And this skill is as important as any a physician possesses, certainly as important and sometimes more important than any high-tech diagnostic or therapeutic maneuver available to you. For much of what you will do as physicians will involve comfort, support, *caritas*.

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Finally, I would want to be assured that you would do what is in *my* best interest, even if the managed-care plan places bureaucratic obstacles in your path. Indeed, I would expect you to fight for me, at whatever your personal cost, to ensure that I receive the care I need. Anything less would be a betrayal of the vows of your vocation.

Just a word now about what I have done in the course of my career. I have spent my time trying to remain true to my vocation as a pediatrician in the setting of health care for disadvantaged children. I know that no more than 8 to 10 percent of you will select pediatrics as a field of medicine, but pediatricians have some skills and attitudes that are applicable to all areas of medicine.

First, the notion of development, of change, is ingrained in the genetic code of all pediatricians. One of the considerable charms of providing medical care for children lies in the privilege of watching the wondrous process of human growth and development, a process that brings with it the optimism of potential, of possibility. I sometimes find myself wondering which of the children for whom we care in Harlem will become the next Arthur Ashe, André Watts, or Alice Walker. I have never been certain that all physicians understand that the developmental process does not end with the right to vote; that a thirty-year-old is very different from a forty-year-old or a sixty-year-old. But the life cycle of development and maturity should be as much a part of the diagnostic analysis of all physicians as it is for pediatricians.

Second, perhaps because they cannot avoid it, pediatricians pay a great deal of attention to their patient's social setting and situation. After all, the social situation, in the form of parents or family, is integral to the care of the dependent, vulnerable child. But this approach is equally important to all physicians. Orthopedic surgeons should know where patients in a long-leg cast live before discharging them. How in the world would the patients manage if home is a fifth-floor walk-up? Internists should know whether widow ladies or spinsters like myself live alone before sending us home after hospitalization, especially now since hospitalization is only for acute care and insurance provides little time for convalescence. Young physicians sometimes see these matters as issues to be delegated to social workers or bureaucrats. But if you become my physician, I expect you to be concerned as much about where and how I live as about which medication or surgery I need.

I do not expect you to know it all, for that is impossible for any of us. More importantly, I do expect you to know what you don't know and to be wise enough to recognize your own limitations.

Third, sometime in the course of their professional careers, most pediatricians find themselves wandering into the never-never land of public health, that is, policy and politics. Perhaps because they see themselves in a real sense as *in loco parentis* for children, at some point most pediatricians become frustrated with solving problems for each individual child and decide they should try to solve the problem for all children. It is not entirely by chance that over the years many pediatricians have assumed major roles in the federal health apparatus. Before Doctor David Satcher became surgeon general, two pediatricians, Antonio Novello and Jocelyn Elders, held that job. Before them, C. Everett Koop, a pediatric surgeon, became one of our most effective public-health spokesmen. But not just pediatricians, all physicians have some responsibility to speak out and to work to solve the public-health problems of the nation.

Now most of you will not spend your lives in the vineyard of the urban ghetto, in city hospitals battling for the resources to provide basic care for the poor. And that's as it should be. The entire population of this nation needs young men and women like yourselves to care for them—the rich and the middle class as well as the poor. And let me assure you that I have spent all this time among the urban poor, not because I had to—not out of any missionary zeal—but because of who I am, what I enjoy doing, and what, over time, I have become reasonably competent at doing. As an Irishman, I enjoy a good fight, especially when it is a fight over something I value as important and just. I recognize that I have the moral *luxury*, and I do mean luxury, of engaging in a struggle that is much more important than I am. But you will encounter other types of fights and struggles for patients in other settings that are equally just and important, and your calling will give you the same "moral luxury."

Finally, I want to give you a very definite prescription. I want you to remember that a red-faced, white-haired Irish lady doctor from Harlem gave you this command one fall day in 1998. In ten years or more, you will have become established in your careers and, as I say, most of you will be situated in comfortable settings, providing invaluable care to your patients. But I am certain that the poor, lacking proper medical care, will be with us even then. So when the time comes, I want you to remember that I told you to look around and find someone who looks like me, who is doing what I do. And you are to go to them and say that a trifle eccentric lady doctor sent you to help them for at least one half-day a week, *pro bono*. For our vocations include some level of responsibility for the poor as well as for our more-affluent citizens. And if you do this, you will find, as I have, the satisfaction of remaining true to what you are setting out to do today. □

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Richard Alleva

PLUCKY GIRLS & WOMEN

'A Soldier's Daughter' & 'One True Thing'

As I watched the Ivory-Merchant adaptation of Kaylie Jones's novel, *A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries*, I gradually realized that it was a whitewash job. That my realization came late is a backhanded tribute to the movie. There's so much interesting stuff at its periphery that one can almost overlook the bunk at its center.

The setting is Paris in the late 1960s and early '70s with a shift to America in the last third of the story. An expatriate couple, successful novelist Bill Willis and his wife Marcella, already the parents of a girl, Channe, decide to adopt an illegitimate French boy, Benôit, who rechristens himself Billy. Since the movie's prologue shows us Billy's birth mother speculating about the future of the child she's surrendering, the audience may be misled into thinking that the fate of the boy and the character of his new parents may be the heart of the movie. But this just isn't so. Young Billy continues, unavoidably, to be prominently featured, but the story's protagonist is clearly Channe. We look through her eyes at the adult world toward which she is growing, and few of her learning experiences have anything to do with her brother.

The real theme of the movie is Channe's growing realization of the great-heartedness of her parents, especially her father. The oddest thing about the film is that, as Channe gets further into the inevitable turmoil of adolescence, her admiration for her parents keeps increasing until, by the movie's conclusion, they are virtually demigods of parental benevolence, just the opposite of what usually happens in life, where teen-agers, for a couple of years, hold their parents to be simultaneously tyrannical and irrelevant.

Let me say at once that if Kaylie Jones (whose novel I haven't read) remade her father, James Jones (the author of *From Here to Eternity*), into a fictionalized, even idealized, portrait, she had every right to do so. But in their adaptation, James Ivory and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala haven't remade him or his wife. They have simply averted their eyes. Bill and Marcella on screen aren't vividly seen paragons but mere outlines of goodness, desperately needing the star power of Kris Kristofferson and Barbara Hershey to fill them in. Early on, Marcella has one lunatic moment of protectiveness when she throws sand into a bullying teacher's eyes. Otherwise, aside from her alcoholic intake, this character is indistinguishable from the Jane Wyatt-Donna Reed TV housemom prototype.

Bill, who should be even more complex, is even more simply drawn. Apparently intended to be a hard-loving, hard-drinking, two-fisted profane Great American Novelist, he often has a glass in his hand and the f-word on his lips, but do we see the effects of drinking on his work? No. On his family? No. Do we see how a good novelist's obsessiveness affects his duties as a parent? No. Do we get to know how the expatriate's life affected his work or character? No. We are shown that Bill has harsh memories of World War II combat that have fructified his writing, but are we ever shown how such emotional scars might have impaired or enriched him as husband or father? Never. Bill and Marcella are shown dispensing lots of good advice (by ultraliberal bohemian criteria) to their daughter, but was there never any real conflict between the generations? There are many group hugs in this movie, but the characters of Bill and Marcella are hugged by this mistily affectionate script into sheer factitiousness.

Hershey is such a fine actress that she manages to endow Marcella with her own sexy feistiness but Kristofferson, remarkable in *Lone Star*, relies here less on his talent than on his now puffy face, punched-out eyes, and growly voice, which lend Bill reality for about twenty minutes, then grow tiresome.

What saves this movie (for it is undeniably gripping and entertaining)? Well, children have lives apart from their parents, and Channe spends time in the company of people who are much more vividly characterized than her parents.

The housekeeper, Candida, is an excellent sketch of just the sort of love-starved, hard-working, vinegary, possessive Frenchwoman who can become indispensable to any American couple living adventitiously in the Parisian culture. Dominique Blanque's sharp-elbowed fierceness in the role is fully

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equaled by her ability to express frustrated love, maternal and sexual; so it's heartbreaking when she gives up her gallant African lover's offer of marriage to stay with the family. (And what happens to Candida after her employers decamp for the States? It is characteristic of this movie's fecklessness that we never learn.)

Even better is the performance of Anthony Roth Costanzo as one Francis Fortescue, a budding singing prodigy and classmate of Channe who becomes her best friend. Star magnetism comes in many packages: the roguish virility of Gable, the frenzies of Cagney and Nicholson, the hauteur of Hepburn, K., the pixyishness of Hepburn, A. Flouncing, preening, giggling, practically cooing over Channe during her first menstruation, wowing his classmates with Mozart, and singing a Puccini soprano aria on a balcony to nocturnal Paris (and, yes, that is the actor's own countertenor we are hearing), young Mr. Costanzo has star magnetism. I don't know what will become of it in a film world where models and bodybuilders become superstars by jumping out of exploding buildings, but magnetism it is.

And better still! Leelee Sobieski is an utter delight as Channe. She seems to be the spirit of a pre-Raphaelite beauty reincarnated as an American teen, and this reinforces the feeling of alienation the character projects when trying to adjust to America after a life spent in Europe. Maybe I couldn't believe in Bill Willis as a novelist but the expressiveness of Sobieski's face convinced me that Channe was a novelist aborning. A world of joy and pain certainly seems to be transpiring behind her eyes.

James Ivory's direction may not have patched the fissures in the script he helped write but, in terms of movement, tempo, and composition, he has worked efficaciously. And, not for the first time in his long career, he has elicited a bunch of great performances.

There are noble and ignoble failures. *A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries* is an ingratiating muddle. But if there had been more real pain in its portrayal of family life, there would have been more real joy, too.

Although *One True Thing* has the same basic situation as *Soldier's Daughter*—a young woman realizes who and what her parents truly are—no one could accuse it of being loosely constructed. The script (by Karen Cron out of Anna Quindlen's novel) bears down relentlessly on its three main characters and never allows any of them to surprise us. They're all just wound-up toy soldiers obeying the dictates of the script's game plan: Renee Zellweger, a hotshot reporter operating in the Big City, is forced to take a break to nurse her cancer-stricken mother (Meryl Streep). She soon learns that the academic father she's adored (William Hurt) has feet of clay and that the homemaker mom she's patronized is the "one true thing" of the title.

An acceptable premise and the leads are well acted (with Streep particularly good at conveying the humiliation felt by a person betrayed by her own body), yet the movie is preposterous. It's clear that when Zellweger is ordered by her father to abandon the fast-track to nurse mom, she'd never consent but would easily get her brother, who hates Harvard, doesn't have a job until the end of the movie, and adores his mother, to fill the post. Dad says he can't hire a nurse because Streep would never consent to a stranger in the house. In the middle of the movie, he does hire a nurse and the mother accepts her. But why bother with probability when you're making a "weepie" disguised as an adult drama?

For the sake of brevity, let me cite just one facet of the movie to demonstrate its utter phoniness. The father is supposed to be an ultra-distinguished literary critic whose collected writings are being issued by Random House in a multivolume set, each with an introduction by another distinguished critic. Yet :

- There isn't a book in sight in the household this man so indefatigably dominates, except for the volumes in his tiny office. (In *Soldier's Daughter*, room after room quite rightly has piles of books toppling off shelves.)
- When the nation's poet laureate shows up for Thanksgiving, the father—this veritable Lionel Trilling! this svelte version of Harold Bloom!—gushes and truckles like a groupie. (Can you imagine Harold Bloom sucking up to Robert Pinsky?)
- When the wife throws a surprise birthday party for her husband in which guests are supposed to dress up as their favorite literary characters, why does everyone (and remember that there must be at least some other academics and critics on hand) dress as a character from children's literature? Perhaps the director, Carl Franklin, who brought such flair to the action thrillers, *One False Move* and *Devil in a Blue Dress*, just wasn't the right man for this particular job. And, considering the *Ladies Home Journal* material, perhaps that's to his credit. □

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Peter Feuerherd

HAVEN'T I SEEN YOU ON TV?

Requiem from a talking head

Andy Warhol's statement that everyone will have fifteen minutes of fame has become a hackneyed cliché. The updated corollary, in our seventy-channel cable world, is that everyone will one day host his or her own talk show.

I have had my talk show, but no longer do. For five years, I was host and panelist for "The Catholic Forum," a cable TV show seen on Long Island and in Brooklyn and Queens, New York. The program, begun by Monsignor Francis Maniscalco, now spokesman for the U.S. bishops, was sponsored by my former employer, the *Long Island Catholic* newspaper. The format was simple: Gather together knowledgeable—are there any other?—journalists to expound upon grave issues of church, state, and culture.

In short, we were the "McLaughlin Group" for Catholics, four of us each week. We had spirited discussions about the pope, the president, the Catholic League, Bosnia, abortion, gay rights, and whatever topic was hot in the news.

When I began, I assumed no one was watching (we were up against Sunday football, after all). But much to my surprise, I found myself in laundromats, banks, and grocery stores being bestowed with perhaps our society's highest honor: People kept asking, "Didn't I see you on television?"

"Well, yes you did," I would modestly respond, beaming with pride that some of my insightful comments were penetrating the cable chatter.

My teen-aged son told me that some of his friends' grandparents—our demographics may well have been similar to "Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman"—were regular viewers. One grandmother even claimed that it was her favorite program. My son, of course, preferred football.

My father would call after each program with a review, sometimes blistering, sometimes favorable, especially if the views articulated on the program resonated with his own. My mother would remind me to get a haircut.

Every show had its own dynamic. Sometimes the panelists would get surly, and as host I would try to lighten the tone. Sometimes I felt the need to kick-start the discussion, so I would throw something provocative into the mix, a trick I learned growing up as a middle child during the '60s when the Vietnam War was regularly argued around our dining room table.

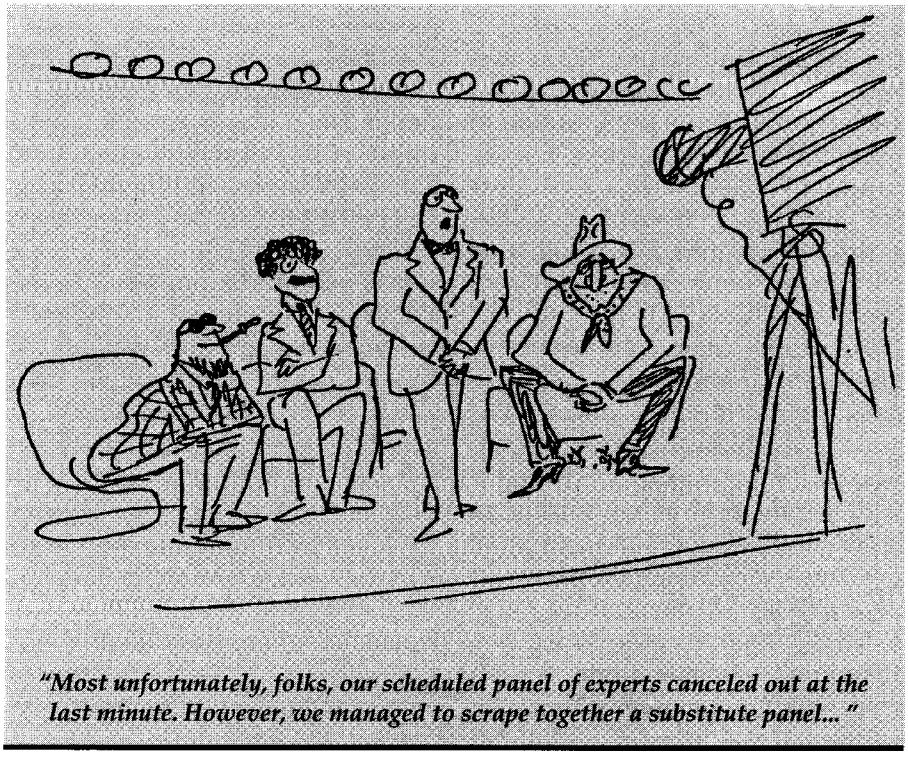
Half the time, I would be a panelist (my hosting role was shared with Rick Hinshaw, now of the Catholic League and formerly with the *Long Island Catholic*, who was considered to be a conservative counterweight to my views), and I could be as opinionated as any other panelist, perhaps more so.

What I discovered through five years of talking on television is that somewhere between the studio and the viewers' living room nuances get lost. Most of the reactions I heard focused on the suspicion of viewers that one panelist obviously didn't like another (which I can testify was untrue; we experienced no off-camera fisticuffs, just an occasional argument which continued after the show in the hallways of the studio).

At times the banter outweighed any subtlety. At the beginning of the Lewinsky-Clinton scandal, what I thought was my brilliant argument for the constitutional rights of the executive branch became interpreted, according to our fan mail, as pure Friend-of-Bill Democratic partisanship.

And we could be dead wrong. One panelist confidently predicted, back in 1994, that we would by now be in the middle of Bob Dole's first term as president.

I also discovered what made for bad television: preparation, or at least too much of it. What seemed like reasoned, well thought-out discourse in the studio, once seen on television, became long and rambling, daring view-



"Most unfortunately, folks, our scheduled panel of experts canceled out at the last minute. However, we managed to scrape together a substitute panel..."

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ers to channel surf.

We also discovered that discussions about events beyond our shores generated little enthusiasm. We could all agree that we were opposed to genocide in Bosnia, but foreign events were generally a topic panelists—with one notable exception—talked about only reluctantly. But throw in something about gay rights, and we got some lively television going.

Although we operated the program under the auspices of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, we were given a largely free hand. I can't recall a discussion which didn't air because of censorship concerns. I'm not saying that some of the station powers-that-be didn't get antsy.

The biggest concern was over sexuality issues, defined here as broadly as possible. One could spout off about genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia, and get little reaction. But my phone would be ringing off the hook with calls from viewers about any panelist who strayed anywhere near what was perceived as unorthodox thought on gay rights, women's ordination, or abortion.

Perhaps our hottest discussion, ironically enough, centered on a television show. The discussion about ABC-TV's "Nothing Sacred" got a bit testy. Mr. Hinshaw was put in the unenviable position of being the sole defender of the Catholic League's opposition, a job he did as well as possible considering the dubiousness of his case.

During the first few years of "The Catholic Forum," I was nervous about the entire enterprise, wondering if I was qualified enough to expound on television. But my view relaxed considerably when I watched the McLaughlin show one day. The panelists were discussing some arcane point of Kremlin politics. I got the sneaking suspicion that they knew as much about the inside workings of the Kremlin as I knew about many of the topics we chatted about on "The Catholic Forum." We were all relatively well-informed and well-read, but rarely did we have the inside-expert status that television exposure seems to automatically grant.

So I am leaving the show, basically because I have left my job at the *Long Island Catholic* for somewhat greener pastures (even television hosts sometimes have to pay for college tuitions). The program, I am told, will be on hold until another host can be found.

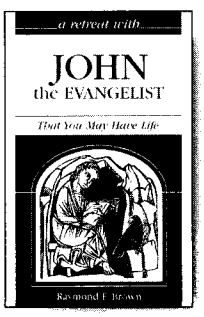
Some, upon hearing that I have moved on, commiserate. "Will you continue the show?" they ask, insinuating that it would take some temporary insanity to voluntarily forgo television exposure.

"No," I say sadly, mulling over what a great opportunity I am giving up to share my wisdom about recent news events, including the Vatican moves on theologians, Rudy Giuliani's cantankerous mayoralty, and, of course, the whole Bill-Monica-Linda-Ken constitutional saga.

But then it was a good run. It's time to move on. My fifteen minutes, after all, have lasted five years, long enough for just about anyone. □

Peter Feuerherd *is a frequent* Commonweal *contributor.*

Retreat With Evangelists and Holy Ones



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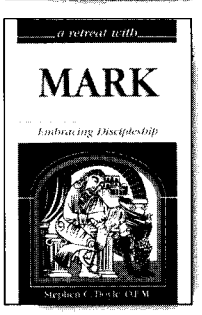

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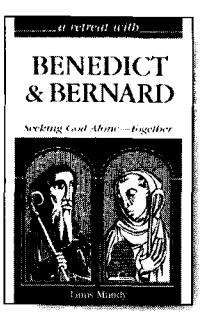

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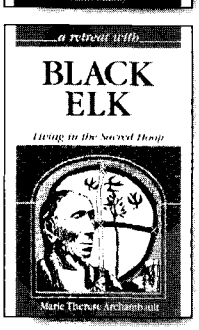

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James Finn

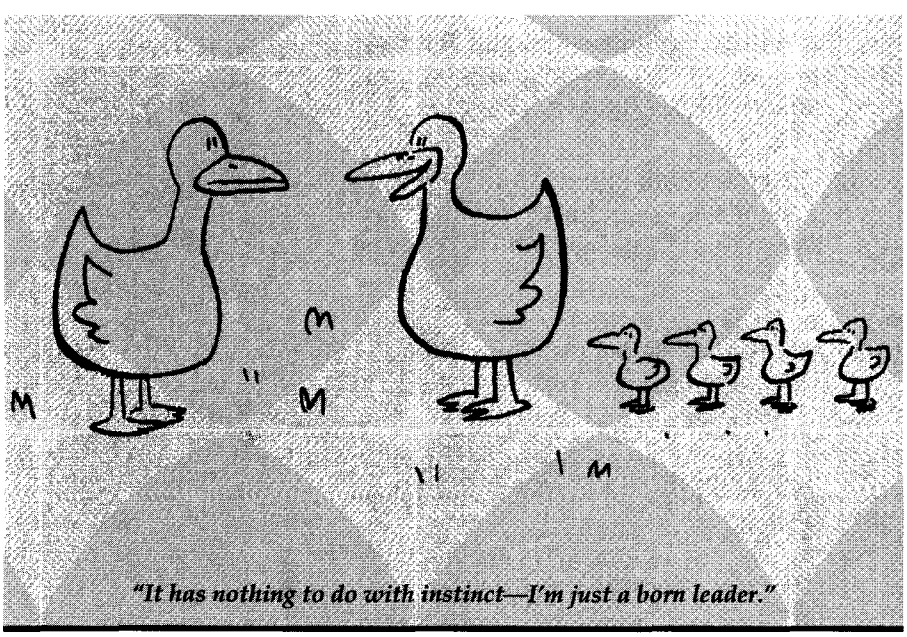
James Chace's study of the political career of Dean Acheson appears at a most propitious time. It is not only an absorbing biography and a sweeping historical overview of the years following World War II, it is a document that bears directly on our present post-cold war period.

When Harry Truman assumed the presidency on the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt in June 1945, neither he nor the country was prepared for the change. In the congressional elections of 1946, the Democrats, under Truman's leadership, suffered a massive defeat. When Truman stepped off the train on his return to Washington, the high government officials who usually greeted the president were nowhere to be seen. There was one lone figure, elegant in tailored topcoat and homburg, the undersecretary of state, Dean Acheson. Delighted to see him, Truman invited him back to the White House for a drink.

Chace begins with this engaging and telling incident, which foreshadowed the significant future relations between these two men. Acheson developed close ties with Truman, both political and personal, at a time when the United States was emerging as a great power on an international scene whose new contours were taking shape in ways that no political leader could have anticipated. The times called for new vision, new initiatives, new and difficult policy decisions. The forged-in-loyalty bond between Truman and Acheson "led to the creation of new institutions so powerful that they came to define—for Americans at home, for allies and adversaries, for good and all—an American international order." ("For good and all" is surely hyperbolic.) It is this bold assessment that allows Chace in his subtitle to go beyond Acheson's more modestly titled book, *Present at the Creation*.

Chace makes his case persuasively by reporting on and analyzing the structures that Acheson helped to build as an active participant and sometimes architect. These include, notably, the Marshall Plan, which helped rebuild war-shattered Western Europe; the Bretton Woods accords, designed to stabilize an international financial and economic order through the instrumentalities of the World Bank (more formally, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development), and the IMF (International Monetary Fund); NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization); and the Truman Doctrine, devised to contain Soviet advances into the Mediterranean area. He was a staunch ally of the president in making decisions about the H-bomb, the civil war in China (where he was prepared to discount Chiang Kai-shek and deal with Mao, whom he projected as the victor), in dealing with the North Korean invasion of South Korea, and with the subsequent insubordination of the redoubtable General Douglas MacArthur. While a number of political leaders capitulated to Senator Joseph McCarthy and his scattershot accusations of Communist sympathies or party membership, Truman and Acheson, who became a high-profile target, stoutly resisted and counterattacked. His friend Archibald MacLeish said that during this period Acheson's intellectual arrogance became a real strength.

To achieve many of his international goals Acheson had to persuade, cajole, and push foreign leaders with strong and varied personalities who had themselves to cope with the radically altered fortunes of their countries. Here he



"It has nothing to do with instinct—I'm just a born leader."

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called upon the vast personal resources he had at his disposal: acute intelligence, a well-equipped mind, charm, wit, conceptual clarity, energy, balance, judgment—and integrity. He inspired both respect and trust even from many who differed with him on weighty policy matters.

When Truman left office in 1952, Acheson's term as secretary of state came to an end, but it was not to be the end of his life as a public servant. He was frequently called back from a private life he enjoyed, even though he missed the excitement of participating in high events, to offer advice and judgment to presidents up to and including even Richard Nixon who, years earlier, had derided what he termed Acheson's "Cowardly College of Communist Containment."

Acheson's career was not, of course, one of all hits and no errors. To gain public and congressional support for the Marshall Plan he deliberately projected a Soviet threat that exceeded his own estimate and thus helped create a political atmosphere he would later try to change. To bring about Senate ratification of NATO he responded to questions about the stationing of American troops in terms that he later described as "deplorably wrong" and "almost equally stupid." His pragmatic judgments about Asian affairs—including his lack of support for Chiang's nationals and his omission of South Korea from an explicitly defined perimeter when he described what the United States would defend militarily—can still stir a small storm. However, as Chace emphasizes, even taking into account his failures or questionable policies, his achievements remain monumental. The institutions constructed under his guidance and the resolute actions he and Truman took did much to set the course of U.S. policies during the cold war.

On what were Acheson's accomplishments based? What formed the bedrock of his character? What values infused his judgments? These questions are not easy to answer and one must tread carefully here. One begins, conventionally, with his family and early education. Like his mother, with whom he was very close, Acheson was an independent spirit, and from his minister father he learned what it means to be decent and civilized. At Groton he was labeled disagreeable and immature. However, he showed his ability to get along with people very different from himself when he joined a rough and bawdy work crew that was pushing the railroad further westward. His rebellious nature was evident in his years at Yale, as were his sharp wit and his predilection for good times over bookish studies. It was at Harvard Law School that he learned to see excellence as a goal and to graduate fifth in his class.

At different times in his career he spelled out standards that guided his actions. Along with contemporaries such as George Kennan, Hans Morgenthau, and Reinhold Niebuhr he was a political realist. In a 1965 article "Ethics in International Relations Today," which Chace does not mention but which can be found in *Amherst Alumni News* of 1965, he dismissed, quite properly, critics of U.S. policy who seemed to believe that moral "solutions" could be readily translated into political policy. But in dismissing the intellectual confusion that bedeviled then-current debates about ethical considerations in political matters he also contributed, I believe, to that confusion. Like many other realists, Acheson was intellectually not realistic enough, failing to recognize the ethical values underlying the judgments that he described as pragmatic. In that sense, he also bore testimony to the fact that it is better and more difficult to practice statecraft—the right ordering of policy—than to define it.

If Acheson could not himself always discern the moral principles on which his decisions rested, he could draw upon them. In the simplest terms he was a man of character who trusted himself and could be trusted. One incident deserves special attention in this regard and is a useful reminder of the moral complexity of the man. In January 1950, Alger Hiss was found guilty of perjury for denying that he had passed secret documents to Whittaker Chambers when the latter was an active Communist agent. Acheson

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Thursday, April 8, 1999 at 8 P.M.:
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knew that he would be asked for his reaction. In the event he referred to Matthew 25:34, but what was widely quoted and evoked a political storm was his simple statement: "I will not turn my back on Alger Hiss." Chace terms this an act of Christian charity and says it may have marked Acheson's finest hour. I find this at least questionable.

Consider: Acheson was a close friend of Hiss's brother Donald but not of Alger, and he personally believed that Hiss's testimony "did not add up." At other times Acheson acted in political terms as a realist and, as Chace writes, was "relentlessly pragmatic." Acheson himself believed strongly that "What may be quite proper and moral for a private citizen...often, and rightly, is condemned if done when he assumes legislative or executive powers of government." Acheson's statement on Hiss was politically disastrous for the president as well as for himself and reduced his effectiveness as secretary of state. Christian charity—if, indeed, it was that—does not commend such political imprudence.

As the United States tentatively makes its way in the post-cold war world, many of the institutions for which Acheson is responsible are still in place but are no longer adequate to present needs. The Soviet empire is no more and socialism as an ideology has been discredited. Today's Russia is a threat principally to itself, China remains a tyranny but is much stronger. Asia plays a greater part in an increasingly interdependent global economy and affects our own. Civil wars in different countries demand our attention, and modern technology has magnified the threat of terrorism.

In political, economic, and military terms the United States is, in this new world, the strongest country there is. It has opportunities and obligations commensurate with its great strength. *Acheson* forces one to conclude that we would be fortunate indeed if, thus historically challenged, we could produce leaders with the competence and character of Harry Truman and Dean Acheson. □

James Finn, *formerly a* Commonweal *editor, is president of the Pueblo Institute.*

A CATHOLIC WORK

Friends of God and Prophets
A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints
Elizabeth A. Johnson
Continuum, $24.50, 306 pp.

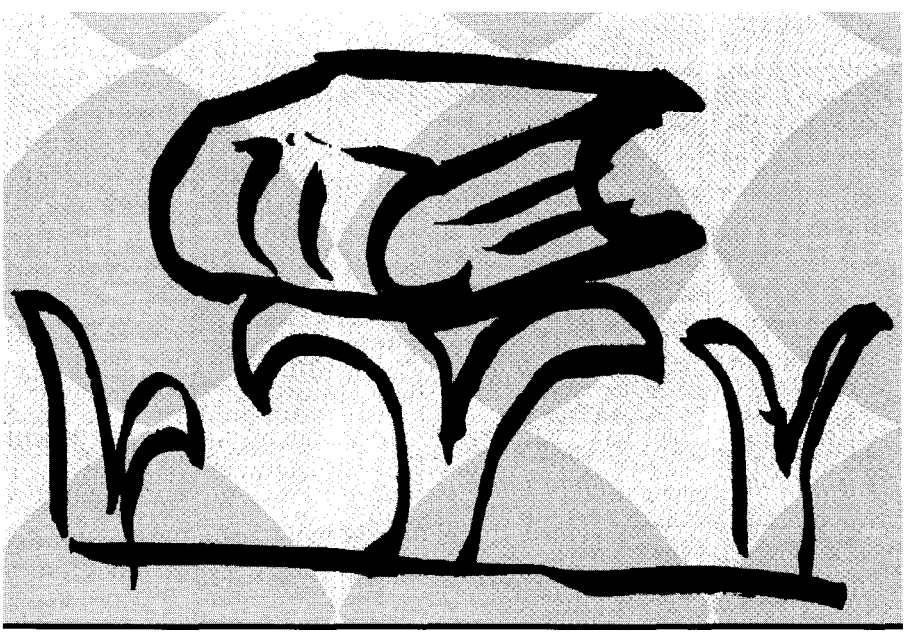
Robert P. Imbelli

Elizabeth Johnson's new book (in many ways a sequel to her influential *She Who Is*) explores a crucial component of the Catholic vision: the Communion of Saints. Whether or not the reality of the *communio sanctorum* has been so neglected in theology as to merit her description of it as "a sleeping symbol," there is no doubt but that its creative reappropriation is desirable, indeed imperative in a culture often marked more by fragmentation and disconnection than communion. *Friends of God and Prophets* is just such a faith-filled and critical reappropriation that seeks to disclose the symbol's "liberating meaning for today."

Following a talented theologian in the skillful exercise of her craft generates genuine excitement. And Johnson is skilled, both in the architectonic sweep of her work and in her careful attention to detail. The book delights as much for its intellectual play of ideas as for its sensuous, if at times repetitive, rhetorical display. It weds passion, piety, and conceptual clarity in a way that has become recognizably "Johnsonian."

The work is Catholic in method: beginning with a first part that "frames the question" and probes the contemporary context, it proceeds to a second part that consults the "living tradition," biblical and patristic, conciliar and papal, before attempting its own systematic synthesis in part three. Professedly "feminist" in perspective and sensibility, Johnson has also clearly apprenticed in the school of Rahner whose influence is pervasive.

The work is also Catholic, corporate and communal, in vision and discernment. The following quote may serve to recapitulate that vision: "In the world of grace as in nature, everyone depends on everyone else, and the courage, witness, and love of one person affects the whole body, as indeed does everyone's



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apathy and sin." Rooted in the distinctively Catholic symbol of the Communion of Saints, Johnson aims to amplify the symbol's scope, extending it in ways that are explicitly egalitarian, ecumenical, and even ecological. Doing so, she draws inspiration from the moving conclusion of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*: "...and that things are not so ill with you and with me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."

Feminist insights and scholarship help propel this expansion toward greater inclusivity and equality. Recovering the memory of victims of oppression, rectifying the distortions of the narrative of women's leadership in the early Christian communities, and rediscovering the subversive tenor of the virgin martyrs' refusal of patriarchal domination, together serve to promote in the present "the coming into being of suppressed selves, newly energized with the fire of the Spirit to bless, to work for justice, to follow Christ by forging new paths of discipleship."

An unanticipated outcome of Johnson's research was to identify two patterns of relating to those acknowledged as holy ones in the memory and practice of the community. She calls the first the "companionship of friends" paradigm and finds it to be an egalitarian approach to the remembered cloud of witnesses who serve the community as inspiration and encouragement on its own journey of faith. The second paradigm, which gradually displaces the earlier one, she terms the "patrons/petitioners" paradigm, whose thrust is hierarchical and patriarchal. In the former, recovered by Vatican II, emphasis lies on the equal baptismal dignity of the entire people of God and the universal call to holiness. In the latter, the unique, often thaumaturgical power of those elevated to sainthood relegates the petitioner/client to a subservient and dependent posture. Though Johnson admits that "boundaries are not absolute" here (and even in her preferred model she finds place for "paradigmatic figures"), she holds that the patterns disclose real attitudes and options with significantly different consequences. And she insists that only the companionship-of-friends pattern is capable of renewing and releasing the power latent in the Communion of Saints symbol.

For what is ultimately at stake and spiritually required today is, in the words of Simone Weil, "the saintliness demanded by the present moment, a new saintliness," whose manner may be its leavening fidelity in ordinary life and whose heroism may lie in its patient waiting for God even in the darkness of God's absence. In the new situation posed by postmodernity, "religious attention," Johnson suggests, "shifts away from miraculous deeds that defy the laws of nature to deeds of friendship and prophecy that defy the weight of systemic power and privilege." Friends of God and prophets: neighbors and nourishers, resisters and survivors, distilling Wisdom from the daily.

However hesitantly and humbly, however analogically and poetically, no theologian can fail, finally, to weave a doctrine of God. Johnson's inclusive communion of holy ones live and move and have their being in the Mystery of God whose Name is "Holy Wisdom," life-giving "Spirit-Sophia." The very title of her book comes from the Old Testament Book of Wisdom which confesses that "in every generation Wisdom passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets." It is the character of God as Spirit-Sophia which braids this new book on the Communion of Saints so tightly to the perspective upon God spun out at length in *She Who Is*.

But this also raises critical questions. Is the biblical foundation for this perspective, relying so heavily upon the Wisdom literature, sufficiently broad and deep? Does a Wisdom reflection, tied so closely to a theology of creation, offer the resources required to do justice to the full biblical witness regarding human sinfulness (attributed not merely to pitiable foolishness, but to demonic malice), and regarding the transformative newness, the sheer grace and cost of redemption? Finally, and most pressingly, despite Johnson's endeavor to establish a trinitarian pattern in her approach to God, does the doctrine of the Trinity truly receive its due?

The doctrine of God reflected in the book's radiant celebration of the Communion of Saints strikes me as a peculiarly undifferentiated one. God appears as Creator Spirit, as Spirit-Sophia, as indwelling Spirit. But "Sophia" alone bears the entire weight of personality in God; she alone lends God a "face." The resultant doctrine of God resembles more an elaborated pneumatology than

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the "three-personed" God of trinitarian tradition.

Let me probe the issue from another perspective. In her discussion of the Christian hope for an ultimate destiny with God beyond history, Johnson gently distances herself from Rosemary Reuther's immanentist eschatology of the self-effacing abandonment of personal being into the great "Matrix of life." Johnson posits, in keeping with the Catholic tradition, the hope of an ultimate personal and communal fulfillment, beyond all imagining: a communion of persons transformed in the "Incomprehensible Mystery" of God. Now such an appeal to the Incomprehensibility of God, beyond all telling, can rightly claim warrant in the Great Tradition from Gregory of Nyssa through Thomas Aquinas to Karl Rahner. But, in them, such awed "agnosticism" about God's true nature is still situated within the doxological context of the revealed Name of God in whom the whole Communion of Saints is baptized: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The total absence of "Father" from this otherwise very catholic book more than disappoints; it risks countenancing a less than trinitarian, ultimately impersonal, vision and prayer.

A further unaccountable absence needs to be noted. In a book so rightly reverential toward the relations of life, so discerning regarding the contemporary threats to human solidarity and the spiritual peril of ruptured connections; in a book that rises to passionate eloquence regarding the bond between generations and that summons us to nurture companionship in memory and hope; in this book there is total silence concerning the spiritual blight of abortion.

Surely a comprehensive discernment of the Communion of Saints needs to be extended to embrace the unborn. Then Johnson's depiction of the "prayer of lament" will be fully Catholic and inclusive: "[Lament] calls us out of passivity into active engagement against all premature death caused by human beings." □

Robert P. Imbelli, *a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, teaches theology at Boston College.*

SHAKING OUT THE FOIL

Hopkins Re-Constructed
Justus George Lawler
Continuum, $34.50, 254 pp.

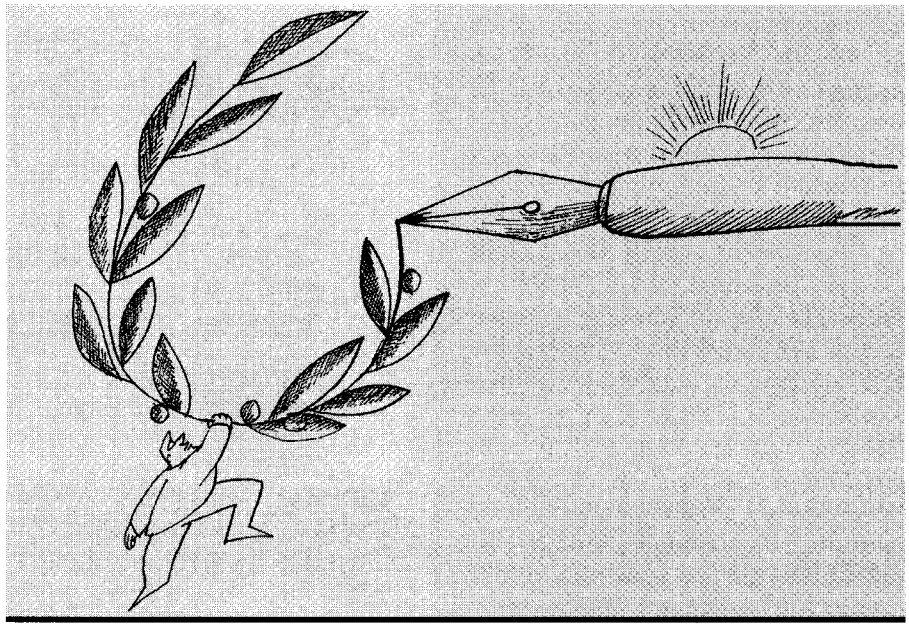
Edward T. Wheeler

We have to give thanks to any writer who lets us read anew familiar poems and so to Justus George Lawler *gratias agamus*. (Lawler's polyglot style—he often uses Latin, German, and French—shows a concern for the liturgical aspects of Hopkins's world and makes a Latin response almost obligatory.) His title tells us that he dismisses literary de-construction—this book aims to "see Hopkins plain." Indeed, Lawler offers a blistering dismissal of a great deal of the criticism written on Hopkins in the last twenty-five years. Hopkins was neither an eccentric nor an anomaly for his time, Lawler argues. Particularly informative are his comparisons of Hopkins to Newman and Tennyson, which reveal a man whose supposed idiosyncrasies come out of a religious and literary tradition many of his critics simply know nothing about. (The ideal Hopkins reader would obviously be Catholic and have spent at least a year in a Jesuit novitiate.)

After destroying the lunacies of the contemporary criticism, Lawler goes on to attempt a rescue of Hopkins from one of his most recent biographers, Robert Bernard Martin (*Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*). Lawler wishes to dispel an "utterly dubious and tendentious theory" that Hopkins had strong homosexual desires for an extravagant Anglo-Catholic youth, Digby Macworth Dolben, and that the early poems record both a sexual encounter and a deep sense of loss at Dolben's accidental death.

Hopkins Re-Constructed requires that readers be familiar with the critical literature and with Martin's biography. Lawler even advises anyone not interested in his criticism of the critics to skip the first two chapters and go right to the reading of the poems. But even that invitation has to have its own *caveat:* his critical analysis uses a methodology he developed in an earlier work, *Celestial Pantomime*, twenty years old but reissued recently in a revised edition. A page or two of that study reappears *verbatim* in the work under review.

All this said, *Hopkins Re-Constructed*



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is a fine book—and Lawler must be a terrific lecturer. (The biographical note says he has taught at various middle western universities, published many books on religious matters, and contributed to *Commonweal*.) His style bears all the verbal signs of the lecturer's voice which jibes, unsettles, and makes extravagant claims in an effort to wake up the chap staring dully out the window. The review of the critical literature is trenchant and very funny; Lawler gesticulates in print, practically slaps the podium in outrage at the nonsense written. The case he makes against Martin's reading, using the same evidence, is persuasive enough, and one can almost feel the rush of pent-up energy as Lawler dismantles those who have invented a dark sexual side to a young man who was actually enmeshed in a struggle about whether or not to go over to Rome.

Lawler begins each of his analytical chapters with a poem, which serves to anchor the discussion and provide links for the following development. He divides the chapters into subsections headed with subtitles in teasing puns (many of which link this work to the critical methodology of his earlier book), and his exegesis is brilliant if, at times, bewildering. Lawler's passion, intelligence, and daunting breadth of reference give the book its value. He loves Hopkins's poetry, admires the man, priest and poet, and makes a strong case for Hopkins as eternal child, *anima candida*, one more lost in wonder at a universe which speaks to him singularly rather than one which tells him he is isolated in his singularity. He cites precursor poems by Herbert, Vaughn, Donne, Marvel, Keats, and many others and puts Hopkins in a proper relationship with the tradition.

Over and over again, Lawler can stop you in the midst of a poem with a discovery, a real disclosure. The meditative analysis of the first line of "God's Grandeur," which begins his reading of the poems, moves from a technical classification of the language used to references to Wallace Stevens and Dr. Johnson, to a distinction between "grandeur" and "glory"—especially in terms of Ignatian spirituality. A link to Teilhard de Chardin and to a sinologist, Joseph Needham, turns the analysis at the close of this four-page reflection to a characterization of Hopkins's poetic vision. This is heady and illuminating stuff. But be warned, Lawler can also befuddle: "But it is the hylomorphic complementarity engendering the transcending hypostasis that is of primary interest...." (Hillis Miller's blurb on the cover refers to the book as an "advanced introduction.")

Lawler's reading rests on a few premises. They include a sense that there is one substructure or pattern in all verse, that the tradition really links all poems, and that Hopkins was a painstaking craftsman and immersed in the literary tradition. Given these, a reader can start anywhere in Hopkins and wind up everywhere, which is not altogether a bad description of what Lawler himself does. His commanding voice is such that it is hard to resist him, decry his polysyllabic and polyglot manner as we might. Hopkins asserted in "As Kingfishers Catch Fire" that "the just man justices." Justus Lawler has done justice for Father Hopkins. □

Edward T. Wheeler *is dean of the faculty at the Williams School in New London, Connecticut.*

Margaret

Her black Irish eyes,
practical as tile,
suddenly open like onyx wells
as she snaps out of sleep.
The ragged breath
slips and then catches
on the edge of the cliff
from which she hangs,
and she's back in the bed, saying
What day is it?
What day?

It's the cusp of October,
humid, tropical, storming through the long afternoon.
Delirious, she's letting old secrets
slip out around the oxygen mask.
She's emptying the last closets
where worries of the details of graduations,
anguish of lost colleges,
irreplaceable keys
quiver in the corners.

If the moon answers to the name
Old Woman Who Never Dies,
what should I call her,
whose waning hand holds mine
as she pulls away from me
into the air of the clean cold Sunday morning?

Anne Higgins

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RELIGION BOOKNOTES

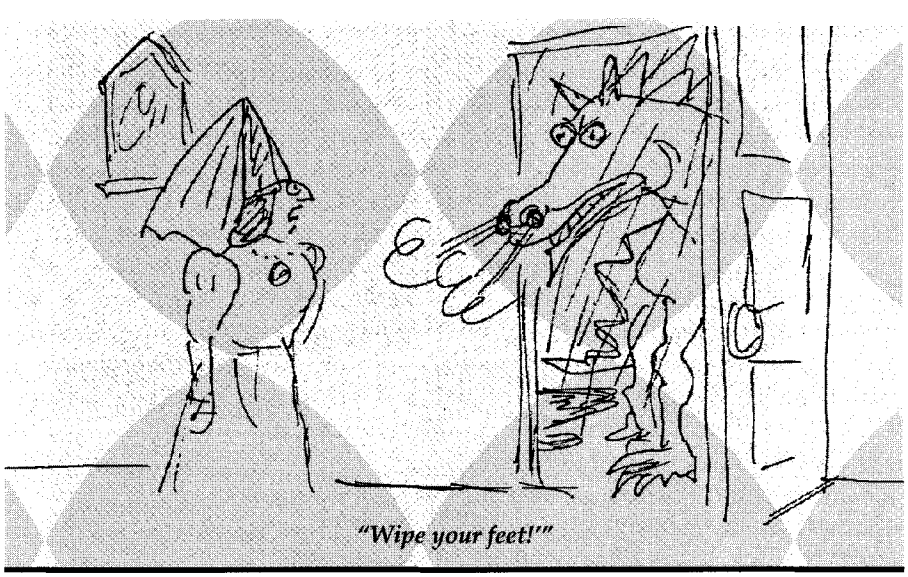
Lawrence S. Cunningham

This year marks the nine-hundredth anniversary of the Cistercian order. As part of the celebration, Cistercian Publications, conspicuous for making available monastic sources and studies for well over a generation, has published James France's handsome and lavishly illustrated volume. This essay on the medieval Cistercians and art features chapters that not only explicate the illustrations but give, in a quite readable fashion, the history of the order. Founded as an attempt to observe the Rule of Benedict in its primitive vigor, the order grew until houses of men and women dotted the medieval map from Eastern Europe to Portugal, from Italy to England, Ireland, and Scandinavia. It is a mark of the vigor of the Cistercian monastic tradition that during Saint Bernard of Clairvaux's (1090-1153) lifetime, his monastery at Clairvaux founded sixty-eight daughter houses.

The Cistercians in Medieval Art
by James France
Cistercian Publications, $50, 278 pp.

France examines the salient features of monastic life (with separate chapters on the abbot, the monastic community, the development of lay brothers, and the communities of women), and ends with four chapters which explicate the liturgy, manual labor, sacred reading, and what the author calls "Edification, Entertainment, and Exposure." Nearly two hundred black-and-white illustrations, twenty-six color plates, a glossary of monastic terms, a good bibliography, and an index (alas, restricted to names and places) are included. The final illustration is a photograph of a monk in the cloister of a Cistercian monastery near Dubuque, Iowa (New Melleray), suggesting the vigor of this form of monastic witness.

This book is a good "browse," a good "read," and a source of much useful, and sometimes odd, information. With the aid of the text we can soon distinguish choir monks from lay brothers, learn that the Cistercian custom of not wearing underclothes beneath the habit triggered much adolescent humor in the Middle Ages, and how long it took a reasonably accomplished copyist to make a full Bible (roughly two-and-a-half years doing six pages a day). Most of all, we get a fine account of one of the most important religious orders in the history of the Western church, as well as a lesson in how a historian can utilize the iconic record to illumine history without doing violence to the work of art. *The Cistercians in Medieval Art* would make a fine addition to any school library and a perfect gift for those, like myself, who love things monastic.



William Schickel is a distinguished architect, sculptor, painter, and designer who comes from a family of artists. His grandfather was the architect responsible for many buildings in New York City, including the church of Saint Ignatius Loyola on Park Avenue. Schickel himself went to Notre Dame in the 1940s and fell under the influence of the "Catholic Revival" that imbued him with a life-long passion for the ideas of Jacques Maritain on the relationship among art, life, and religious truth. He has made his home in Loveland, Ohio, where, over a span of nearly fifty years, he has produced a stream of religious and liturgical art as well as designs for a number of striking churches, chapels, and public buildings.

The Art of William Schickel
by Gregory Wolfe
University of Notre Dame Press, $45, 161 pp.

Loveland, of course, is the home of the Grail—the lay movement of women who encouraged the young Schickel to work in their art program and gave him his first important church design opportunity: to turn an old hay barn into a chapel. He did so in a stunning fashion. Schickel also did the renovation of the abbey church of Our Lady of Gethsemani in Kentucky, and, in the bargain, designed the furnishings (made by the monks) in a style appropriate for the austere aesthetics of the Cistercian tradition.

Those buildings, as well as shrines, the church of a Benedictine priory, private homes, the beautiful "roofless church" in New Harmony, Indiana, and even the design for a minimum-security reformatory, are all lushly illustrated in this book. Handsomely produced, the book features a useful essay by Gregory Wolfe. My only criticism is that many of the illustrations lack information concerning the objects' actual dimensions

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(how large are the photographic illustrations of famous prisoners depicted on the wall of the reformatory?) and, frequently, dates of completion.

Schickel represents a strain of religious art that reflects the thought of a certain strand of scholasticism as well as a "modernist" conviction whose other practitioners would include such artists as Eric Gill, Georges Roualt, and Marc Chagall. He is a powerful artist whose work I admire enormously.

Belden Lane's deeply contemplative book features three interwoven strands which, though discrete, reflect a com-

The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality
by Belden C. Lane
Oxford University Press, $25, 282 pp.

mon urgency. Lane, a Presbyterian pastor and academic who teaches at Saint Louis University, is a hiker, climber, and camper. He has a deep love for those two primordial loci of the biblical spiritual experience: the desert and the mountain, and he chronicles his visits to such places not as a tourist but as a spiritual seeker. His journeys, to the deserts of New Mexico and the Sinai, to mountains like Tabor and Sinai, are set against the drama of his mother's death. In her final days she is befuddled by physical pain and the onset of Alzheimer's disease. Against this interplay of movement and stasis he sketches out, but not systematically, that strand of theology which is called mystical, negative, "imageless," or *apophatic*.

Lane is too sophisticated a theologian to argue that a person lives exclusively in the realm of the negative search for God. All of the great theologians, from Gregory of Nyssa through the Pseudo Dionysius to the great Carmelites like Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, hold the way of negation in tension with the way of light; the way of image and symbol with the way of the aniconic; the way of darkness with the way of illumination. Hence, in some very fine pages, Lane holds in tandem Mount Tabor, where Jesus is transfigured, and

"Two round-trips to 'Thitter.'"

Mount Sinai, where Moses enters into the cloud to meet God. It is to Lane's credit that he never reduces the apophatic tradition in Christianity to some kind of Plotinian abstractionism.

I would praise Lane's book for some precise merits. First, he writes of spirituality from within the Christian tradition and free of new-ageish fluff. Second, he is not afraid to intersperse his study with personal experience. For that reason, what he has to say cuts close to the bone. This is not a bloodless academic treatise. Finally, he has read widely and uses his reading to good purpose. I did find this book a bit prolix. Some of the chapters have been previously published and perhaps as a consequence there is some repetition. That minor cavil aside, one must praise Lane for an intelligent and deeply felt work. Toward the end of his book, he writes that "fierce landscapes" offer a strange solace yet "they require...a discipline (or *habitus*) capable of disclosing meaning." Lane, it seems to me, has that discipline.

Since 1985, Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana, has sponsored an

The Quotidian Mysteries
by Kathleen Norris
Paulist, $5.95, 89 pp.

annual lecture to honor the memory of scholar and poet Sister Madeleva Wolff, the former president of that school. Monika Hellwig was the first lecturer, and a distinguished roster of American women have followed her to the podium to reflect on women and various aspects of religious belief and practice. The 1998 lecturer, Kathleen Norris, as best I can determine, is the first Protestant to be so honored.

Norris, of course, has gained national fame as an articulate writer on Christian spirituality. She has an excellent reputation as a poet and critic as well. Her Madeleva lecture, as the title indicates, is concerned with how the quotidian can be an opportunity for the cultivation of God's presence in the world. Daily drudgery is not sanctifying as such, but to neglect its essential place in our lives is to miss a rich resource for the development of a healthy Christian life. Norris, in short, provides a contemporary account of ordinary spirituality which has behind it a tradition with deep roots in the history of Christian ascesis. Norris makes the important point that Incarnation, after all, is concerned with our bodies and their needs.

I heard the shortened version of this lecture delivered to a near standing-room-only audience. Its compelling message is distilled from a blend of personal autobiographical musings and wry humor, and deepened by a long engagement with monastic values. From her long-standing relationship to the Benedictines as an oblate, Norris has learned, as she puts it elegantly in this

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little book, that "it is a paradox of human life that in worship, as in human love, it is in the routine and the everyday that we find the possibilities for the greatest manifestation." That paradox is, of course, held in tension in the monastic motto, "to work and to pray."

It is a curious but true fact that the most engaging writers of serious Christian spirituality in this country (think of Annie Dillard, the late Denise Levertov, Patricia Hampl, Nancy Mairs, etc.) are women who have been able to recoup traditional sources of Christian practice, refine them through their own experiences, and write about them in a compelling fashion. In that company one lists Kathleen Norris, whose writing comes near to classic status.

This past year has seen a spate of books on the papacy. My guess is that we will see even more thanks to the coming of the millennial events and the inevitable speculation about what kind of pope is needed and/or possible once John Paul II passes from the scene.

Vicars of Christ: Popes, Power, and Politics in the Modern World
by Michael P. Riccards
Crossroad, $29.95, 355 pp.

Riccards, whose previous work was on the leadership styles of the American presidency, offers a study of the modern papacy beginning with the long reign of Pius IX and ending with the current pontiff. This work is heavily dependent on secondary scholarship in English and does not reflect any archival work. It is a popular (which does not mean superficial) history of the papacy with a specific interest in how various popes exercised their authority.

Riccards demonstrates how the internal life of the church is always bound up with the larger world. From Pius IX to Pius XI there was, for example, the so-called "Roman Question": namely, the relationship of the church to the newly independent Italian nation. In that same period, the popes could not be indifferent to the often ferociously anticlerical governments in traditionally Catholic countries like Spain, France, Germany, and Italy itself. Even the missionary activities of Catholicism, which were extensive in the last century, could not be disengaged from the colonialism of the time.

This book takes up each pope in turn, making an assessment of their diplomatic efforts *ad extra* as well as their care for and concern with internal church matters. Riccards's review of the recent past helps put the exigent realities of today's church life into perspective. It is salutary to be reminded that talk of a general church council predated Pope John XXIII; that Cardinal Wojtyla had a significant hand in crafting the encyclical *Humanae vitae*; that as early as the reign of Pius XII there was some discussion about emending the rule of celibacy for all Western clergy. I was forcefully struck by Riccards's observation that when Pius XII died it was thought that his influence would last a hundred years. In fact, it was over in two. Having lived in Rome at that time, I remember the adulation that the pope received, the obsessive scrutiny given to every one of his pronouncements, the curious stories about his mystical visions, the laments at his passing, and the ambivalent reputation he possesses today.

One fact that does stand out is that every pope shapes the college of cardinals, but rarely does his successor turn out to be a mirror image of himself. Riccards also argues that there are real perils for those who wish to reform from above. That fact may help explain why the popes in general put more energy into conserving the life of faith than into changing it. When rapid change comes, some popes (John XXIII) accept it with much more equanimity than others (Paul VI).

In general, despite a number of misprints and other minor errata, this is a readable work by an understanding but critical Catholic historian. The only pope for whom he shows unreserved admiration is John XXIII, but Riccards is sympathetic to the excruciating dilemmas of those, like Benedict XV and Paul VI, who got caught up in huge cultural and political changes over which they had little control. Riccards's measured criticisms will only be disputed by papal idolaters. Even in those cases where his judgment is harsh (for example, Pius XII at the end of his papacy; Pius X 's crusade against the modernists), he is not insensitive to the genuine accomplishments of those he criticizes. □

Lawrence S. Cunningham *teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

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BANNED IN DENMARK

Dorothy Mills

A series of rulings by the European Union against Danish products has culminated in a ban on a cherished Danish children's toy: the hopscotch markers that kids throw into squares drawn on the sidewalk while playing the traditional jumping game. Those markers, which are made of heavy glass incised with beautiful designs, have been used by three generations of Danes. Especially since the Danish glass companies began using symbols from Hans Christian Andersen stories on the markers, the Danes think of them as a cherished cultural heritage. But because they are made of glass, an EU agency decided they must be dangerous to play with. So, despite the fact that the hopscotch markers do not break, their manufacture was banned.

Before the hopscotch ruling went into effect, EU agricultural regulations had for several years annoyed Danish producers. Although the EU pronounced in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 that it would respect member countries' "national identities," it nevertheless ruled against three popular Danish food products, banning the sale of Danish feta abroad, ruling against the export of Danish liver paté (said to be inedible by anyone except Danes), and regulating the curve in Danish cucumbers.

Yes, the curve in cucumbers. The "maximum height of the arc" is carefully measured. If they are too curved, they are relegated to class 2 and thus command lower prices than class 1 vegetables.

When a Danish sports historian, Dr. Jørn Møller, heard about the ban on children's hopscotch markers he knew he had stumbled into something similar to the cucumber dispute. So he started a tongue-in-cheek association called the Popular Movement for the Preservation of Hopscotch Markers of Glass, soliciting support from the media and the public throughout Scandinavia, and, through the Internet, from sports historians around the world.

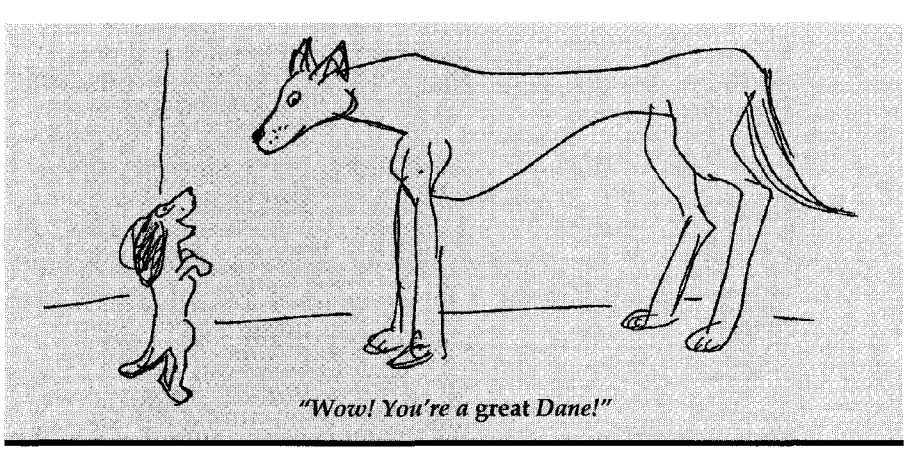
In the resulting controversy, even Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen got into the act. In a nationwide broadcast he slammed the EU's "unpopular bureaucracy, secretiveness, and nonsensical regulations." Declaring the hopscotch marker "one of the favorite toys of my childhood," he pronounced the ban "too much." The politicians assembled for his meeting laughed and applauded.

During the controversy, Møller and a colleague, a researcher named Erik Kaas Nielsen, received hundreds of letters of support and even money from citizens outraged by the ban. Møller estimates that 60 percent of the country lined up on his side. Toy-shop owners who wanted to continue selling the markers posted lists of protesters in their stores. A few of Møller's supporters told him frankly that their opposition to the ban on hopscotch markers offered them an opportunity to sabotage the EU, and a Danish action group that strongly opposes the EU considered making the ban a theme of its next convention.

Danish bureaucrats, when challenged on their acquiescence to the EU ban, first declared they were helpless to interfere, but within a few months they reversed themselves, giving as an excuse that they had misinterpreted the EU ruling after all. The hopscotch markers could be manufactured, and children using them would not be breaking the law. Newspapers exulted "Hopscotch Stone Legal Again," and "Long Live the Hopscotch Stone; Play Victory: The Danish Hopscotch Stone Is Saved." The whole adventure with the stones fed the Danish perception, as Møller puts it, that "those silly bureaucrats in Brussels have nothing better to do than to invent absurd regulations."

Perhaps the trend forecaster John Naisbitt is correct with his gloomy prediction that the Maastricht Treaty is doomed to fail because its supporters cannot grasp that "although people want to come together to trade much more freely, they want to be independent politically and culturally. There will be no real union of Europe. [The EU] is [union] in name only." For the Danes, hopscotch markers apparently exemplify the cultural independence Europeans desire.

Meanwhile, it's untrue—a classic Euromyth—that a standard-sized Eurocondom is about to hit the market, one that would fail to recognize national differences (if any) in the size of organs. The EU tried only to establish voluntary safety standards for these products. □



"Wow! You're a great Dane!"

Dorothy Mills *is the author of* The Sceptre *(forthcoming, Xlibris), a historical novel that takes place in Europe in the 1930s.*

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The Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion at Yale

Call for Applications and Nominations for Fellowships

The Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion at Yale invites applications and nominations for Junior and Senior Fellows for the 1999-2000 academic year.

The Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion at Yale

The Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion at Yale is directed by Harry S. Stout, Jonathan Edwards Professor of American Christianity and John B. Madden Master of Berkeley College, and Jon Butler, William Robertson Coe Professor of History.

The Pew Charitable Trusts established the Institute in September, 1998 with a grant of $2.2 million. Its four-fold mission is to:

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- address moral and spiritual concerns of leadership in national and international contexts; and
- remedy the relative inattention to and ignorance of the role of religion in American history and contemporary life among policy-makers, scholars, and practitioners.

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The theme for the 2000-2001 academic year will be Religion and Economic Policy.

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